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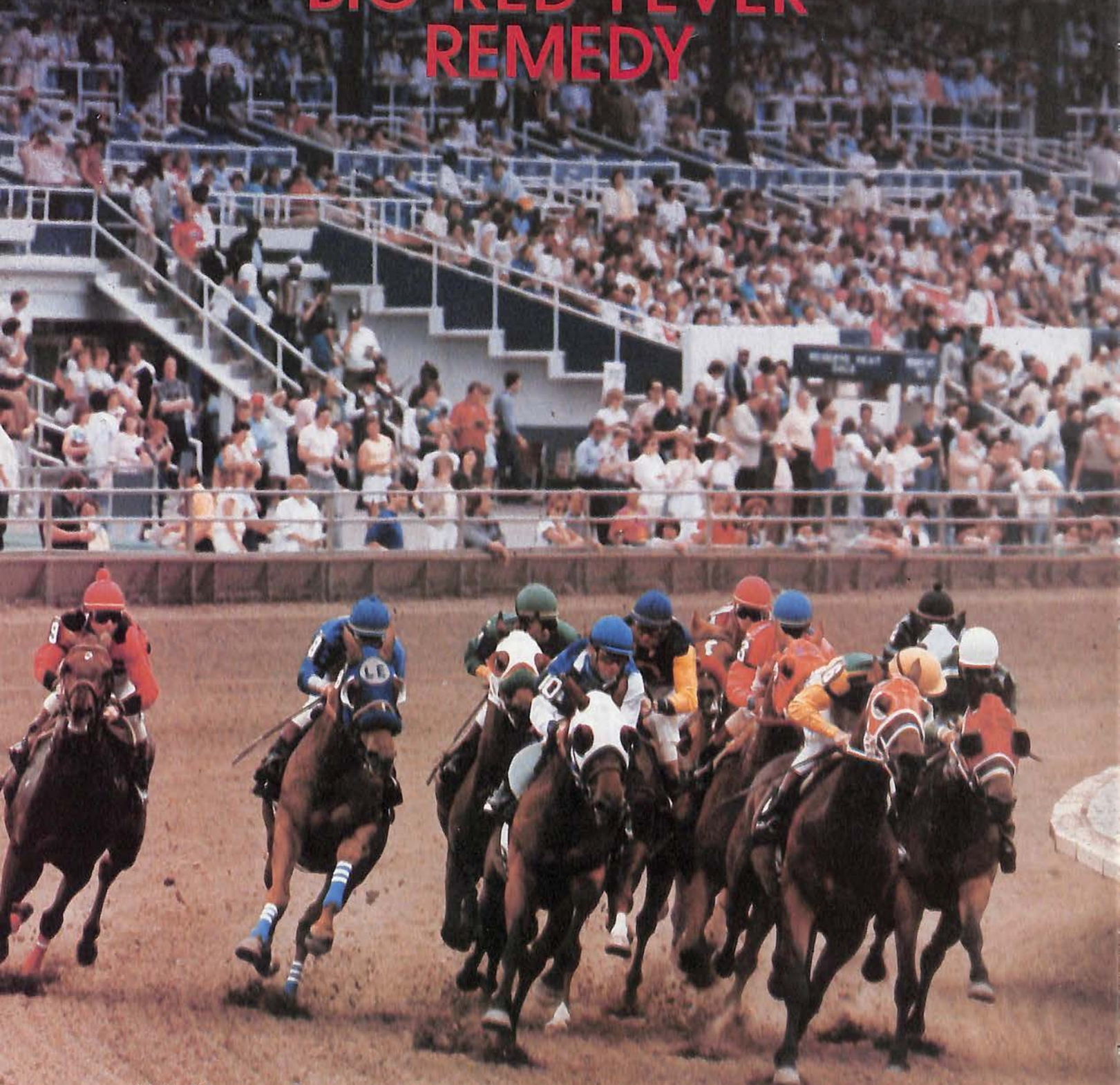
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On The Cover

All-American voters continue to overlook winners (like Steve Taylor in this photo by John Bills), going instead for quarterbacks with big passing stats.

In The Next Issue

What's ahead in spring practice, as well as a basketball wrap-up and much more.

Huskers Illustrated...

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Letters

GO BIG RED!

Dear Huskers:

I would like to congratulate the volleyball team on their great performance this year and wish them all the best in the future.

Also, I would like to congratulate the football team on yet another great season, and keep it up, Tom!

The people in Nebraska are lucky. I would think they (the ones who complain) would be thankful because, if you live in another state like I do,

all you get is dragged through the coals and ribbed if the Huskers do lose. Plus, they don't have to listen to coaches like Hayden "The Cry" Fry.

Jerry E. McGuire
Greenville, Iowa

BOMBS AWAY, BOZ

Dear Huskers:

First of all, we are sure the NCAA is glad they have one less player than what they had a short time

ago; that player is the Boz.

Doctors knew that steroids caused side effects, but they failed to recognize that they also cause diarrhea of the mouth and cause your hair to change colors.

The NCAA should have taken away Boz's last year, not Barry.

We speak for all the Husker fans when we say we are proud that our star players do not have holes in their ears and are drug-free.

Remember, Boz, just say no!

Good luck, Pete Rozelle. You'll need it.

Doug Koster
Lexington, Nebraska

CAMPER

Dear Huskers:

My son is an avid Nebraska fan. He eats, sleeps and thinks Nebraska. Chad is a freshman in high school and is interested in Coach Osborne's football school in June. He is 6-foot-5, 190 pounds, and I'm sure his coach would write a letter if it's needed. Could we please obtain information on the football school cost and also a registration form?

Connie Tobiasson
Dolores, Colorado

Connie: There are three sessions of Big Red football school, all in June: 3-6; 7-10; and, 10-13. The cost is \$125 and includes all meals. The camper, however, should bring some spending money. You can obtain an application by writing to: Big Red Football, 217 S. Stadium, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588. You might not want to delay as these camps usually fill up quickly.

TOUCHING CONSOLATION

Dear Huskers:

Thank you very much for giving us fans a very enjoyable issue of *Huskers Illustrated* (Dec. 31).

I didn't think it was possible to write another story about how the Cornhuskers lost to Oklahoma and come up with anything new (after reading accounts in two newspapers and one national magazine). But you folks did. I enjoyed it thoroughly. But there was no mention of who wrote the article "Husker Dream Becomes 20-17 Nightmare," on page 18.

I also want to compliment John Bills on his cover photograph of Danny Noonan "rubbing it in" on Janelle Holieway. I was in the stands for the game but I missed seeing

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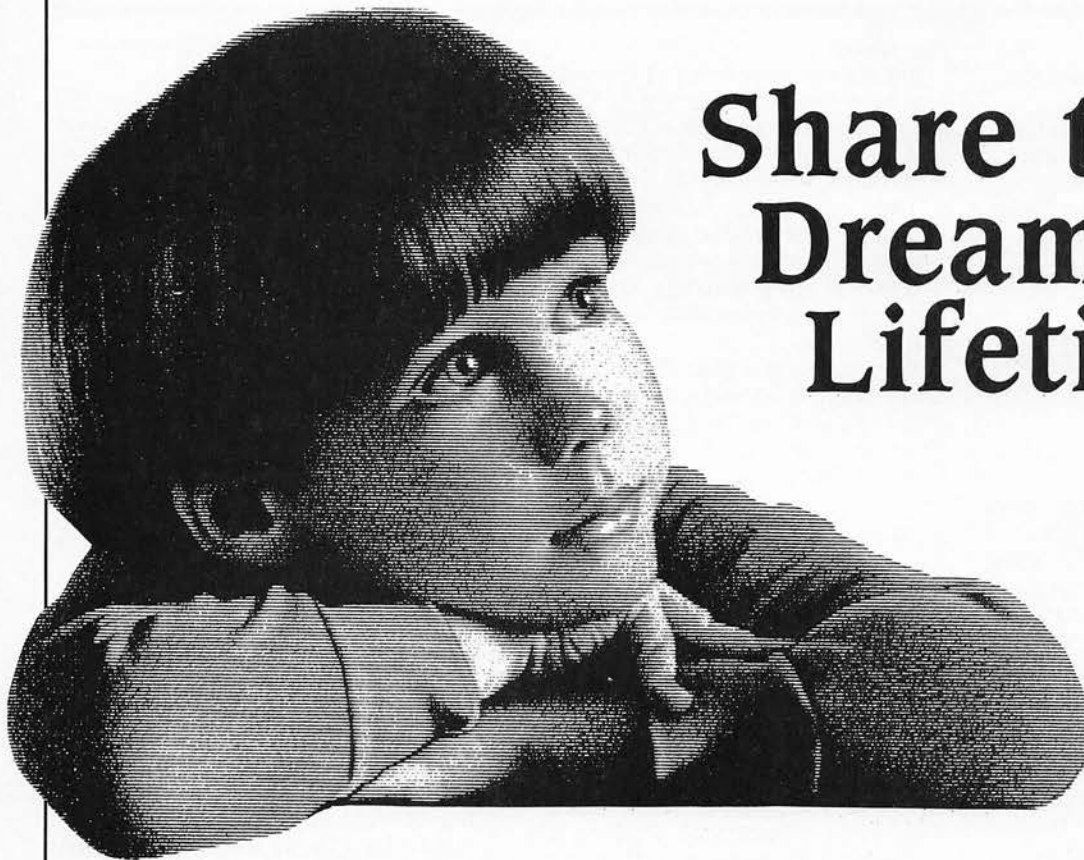
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Danny "touch" Jamelle.

It was sure a tough loss. But I do have one consolation. The two women sitting next to me, with Oklahoma buttons all over them, got up and left before the game was over because they thought the Sooners were going to lose. Nebraska fans would never do that.

Dan Dillon

Wichita, Kansas

Dan: Feature writer Mark Owens wrote the Nebraska-OU game story you mentioned.

SANTA FE FAN

Dear Huskers:

I must have given you more address changes than Coach Osborne has victories. The best thing about leaving wild Las Vegas for tranquil Santa Fe is that I can pick up the Cornhuskers on some small religious station which is only 65 miles away. If there is a Cornhusker fan club in Albuquerque or Santa Fe, could you let me know?

I'm also wondering if there are other native Nebraskans like myself (I'm from Omaha) that suffer from H.A.B.A.F.N.W.A.O.U.A.I.A.D.S.F.? This terrible malady stands for...Having A Brother Also From Nebraska Who Attended Oklahoma University And Is A Dreaded Sooner Fan!

The publication continues to get better with each change. What I like are the composite stats like those on Page 20 of the Nov. 21 issue.

Marc Kaplan

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Marc: Here's a great source for finding out about support groups. Just contact Alice Kadaby, Nebraska University Alumni Office, 1520 'R' Street, Lincoln, NE 68588.

HOME IT!

Dear Huskers:

The K-State game demonstrated beyond any doubt that we need a dome over our stadium. It would be of tremendous benefit for games in stormy weather and when practicing for bowl games.

We have a million and a half folks in Nebraska and another million ex-Nebraskans who live in other states. If each of them would give just \$1, we would have \$2.5 million for a new lid. Of course, that wouldn't work because some of those people are babies, some can't spare a dollar and some don't care enough to give

two cents.

But surely 10 percent of them are real fans and would give \$10. Or maybe one percent are rabid fans and would give \$100. Either way or both ways, we'd have \$2.5 million.

Then how about putting a plaque in front of the stadium listing the names of contributors who gave \$10,000 or more with the name of the largest contributor at the top of the list?

This isn't just a pipe dream. It is badly needed. It ought to be done and I think it can be done.

Stephen Case

Lincoln, Neb.

QUID PRO QUO

Dear Huskers:

Who do we cheer for? With all those Husker fans looking forward to this year's NFL draft, it will be even harder to choose an NFL team to cheer for.

The Houston Oilers seem to be the odds on favorite with no less than five former Huskers, or what about the record-setting all-Husker backfield in San Francisco? The Bengals also would have claim to this argument. I feel that with this upcoming NFL draft and Nebraska sending a lot of players to the pros, it should narrow down our choices.

Don Greco

Toronto, Ontario

RECRUITING

Dear Huskers:

Just a small favor to ask about maybe getting more information on recruiting for next year. I haven't heard who the top guys across the country are going to be or even in Nebraska. I like the stories on high school players that you ran back during the football season and I'd like to see more of that.

Also, I thought the bowl issue was interesting and unusual. I didn't get to go to the Sugar Bowl, but it sounded like a riot. Maybe the TV people thought it was a boring game, but I loved every minute.

Thanks again for all the recruiting stuff you can put in.

Danny Samuel

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Dear Huskers:

I've got to have more on the high school players that Nebraska signs. It was pretty good in the Sugar Bowl issue, but it sure seemed like the

Huskers got a lot of early signees this year. Is that unusual?

I am so proud to see how young men all over the country are attracted to Nebraska and want to play football here. I can't figure at all why they'd ever even consider going to Oklahoma. The magazine is great and so are the HUSKERS!

Seth Maxwell

Atlanta, Georgia

Seth: that's a point well taken and we hope you'll find this issue's look at recruiting both informative and interesting. We've tried to go a little deeper than the usual roundup. Also, remember to store this issue for future reference. We receive more requests for back issues of the annual recruiting wrapup than any other issue.

1985 SUCCESS

Dear Huskers:

I'm writing to see if you could send me a 1985 football schedule of the powerful Nebraska Cornhuskers with their ranking and what ranked teams they played. Cheering for Nebraska. Go Big Red. I'll appreciate the schedule.

Gary Norcrass

Navajo, New Mex.

Gary: In 1985, the 9-3 Huskers finished the year ranked No. 10 by United Press International and played six ranked teams, all of which went to bowls. Husker opponents who were ranked at some point during the season were Florida State (9-3), Illinois (6-5-1), Oklahoma State (8-4), Colorado (7-5) and Oklahoma (11-1). Here's the 1985 season in review: FSU 17, NU 14; NU 52, Illinois 25; NU 63, Oregon 0; NU 38, New Mexico 7; NU 34, OSU 24; NU 28, Missouri 20; NU 17, Colorado 7; NU 41, K-State 3; NU 49, I-State 0; NU 56, Kansas 6; OU 27, NU 7; Michigan 27, NU 23.

*We want to hear your comments and answer your questions. Please address them to **Letters**, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501. ♦*



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Question: What does the future hold for option quarterbacks? **Answer:** a) constant pounding from defensive ends and linebackers; b) limited pro football opportunity, always as a defensive back; c) a light at the end of the tunnel.

Correct answer? All of the above, and, for option quarterbacks like Steve Taylor, that distant light is the spotlight of national media attention,

honors and awards. It's a ray of hope instead of the high beams from oncoming Anonymity Express, a freight train of habit, ignorance and poor timing that has kept top-flight option quarterbacks from intercepting post-season honors from their pro-style passing counterparts.

In 1983, quarterback Turner Gill was arguably America's best. He developed into Nebraska's first, true option threat, passing for 1,516 yards and rushing for another 531; that's

2,047 total yards. Defending college champion Penn State and a national TV audience saw Gill score the first two Husker touchdowns (one a pass, the other a one-yard run) enroute to a 44-0 thrashing of PSU in the season opener. He eventually ran for 53 yards and passed for 158 more. What had been ballyhooed as the Kickoff Classic was, instead, a kick in the teeth for Coach Joe Paterno, who suffered the worst defeat in his career. By season's end, Gill personally accounted for 25 touchdowns, only four short of Heisman Trophy winner Mike Rozier. However, Gill's last challenge, having led Nebraska to an undefeated regular season amid touts this was the greatest team of all time, was out of his control. Football experts would judge whether he was an All-American.

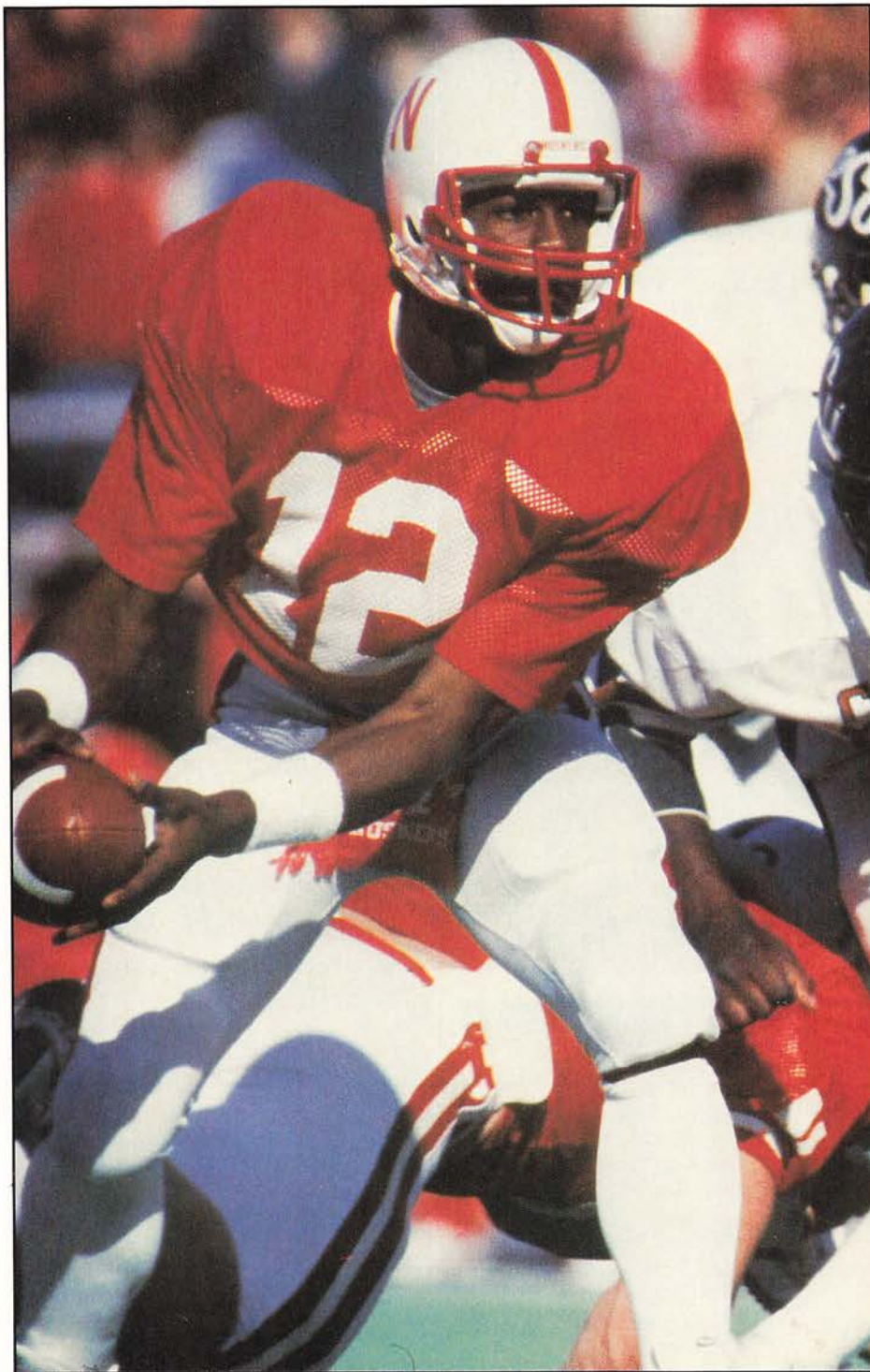
They judged he was not.

Gill's 152.7 efficiency rating couldn't stand on its own. His 1,516 passing yards by themselves weren't enough; neither were his 531 yards rushing. And because no statistic exists for leadership and guts, he lost out on All-American honors to the likes of Steve Young (BYU), Ben Bennett (Duke), Chuck Long (Iowa) and Bernie Kosar (Miami), all with gaudy passing stats.

Ah, sweet stats. Fun to play with, easy to read and even easier to misinterpret. Chewing gum for the mind. And one of many reasons why young, talented option quarterbacks like Taylor and Oklahoma's Jamelle Holieway (as gifted as, if not more talented than, their passing counterparts) never grab top collegiate honors. Stats have blocked their paths to national stardom like a wall of defensive ends.

"It's unfair," says Frank Broyles, former president of the College Football Coaches Association of America. "We in the football community pay too much attention to the quarterback's passing stats. You'll see, I think, that many of the quarterbacks with the best passing numbers are on losing teams — although that wasn't the case so much this year."

Because of this love affair with stats, first team All-American honors have been won by only two Division I-



Turner Gill was the nation's most successful quarterback for three years, but missed out on higher national honors because he could pass and run.

A option quarterbacks: wishboners Marty Akins of Texas (in 1975) and Jack Mildren of Oklahoma (in 1971). Gill was a second-teamer in 1983. Actually, Gill probably received the most prestigious recognition of the three. His runner-up citation came from the tradition-rich Associated Press while Akins' first-team status was accorded by the Football Writers Association of America and Mildren was named to the low-profile Churchmen's All-American team.

Why is it the most knowledgeable people in college football continue to overlook option quarterbacks for top honors?

"It's hard to convince people to think any other way," says Herschel Nissensen, AP sports editor. "And I've tried! It would be great, I think, to select your All-American quarterback based on his team's won-loss record. Years ago, I pushed for Joe Theisman as our selection over Jim Plunkett because Theisman kept getting his team in the end zone. He wasn't an option quarterback, but he also didn't have

paint such a muddled statistical picture—stats gone schizophrenic?

"He runs, he throws forward passes, lateral passes and backward passes," says NCAA statistician Jim Wright. "They're hard guys to figure out with statistics. For example, when pro quarterbacks drop back to throw, that's what he's going to do. Throw. In college, though, you can't assume an option quarterback is going to throw, and that's why, when a quarterback is sacked in college, we always credit him with a rushing loss. In pro football, they do something strange like subtract the loss from total team rushing yards, like a team rebound in basketball."

Taylor rushed in 1986 for 656 yards but also sustained losses of 119 yards, 80 of which came on pass plays. So, for statistical simplicity, the NCAA swipes 80 yards worth of ammunition that Taylor could have used in his hunt for post-season honors. With those losses credited to a team total (like the pros do), Taylor's rushing average would have rocketed to 4.7 (in-

stead of 4.1).

"The right way," Wright says, "to accurately record rushing yards would be to decide on each play if the quarterback was going to run or pass. But how can you do that when the play is actually designed so that the quarterback throws if the receiver is open but runs if he's covered?"

Another statistical handicap for Taylor and his option brethren is the option pitch. The down-to-earth Wright explains, "Even though he tosses a ball through the air with as much skill as a drop-back passer, we've got to record it as a handoff. Let's say your Steve Taylor runs five yards downfield then pitches the ball to your halfback who runs it in 70 yards for a touchdown. Only one guy is going to get credit for that play. You can't statistically say that two players carried the ball on one play. Even though he made a great read on the option, ran great and made a super pitch, that quarterback's just not going to get statistical credit for the touchdown.

"We've got 191 Division I teams to

The Option Quarterback...

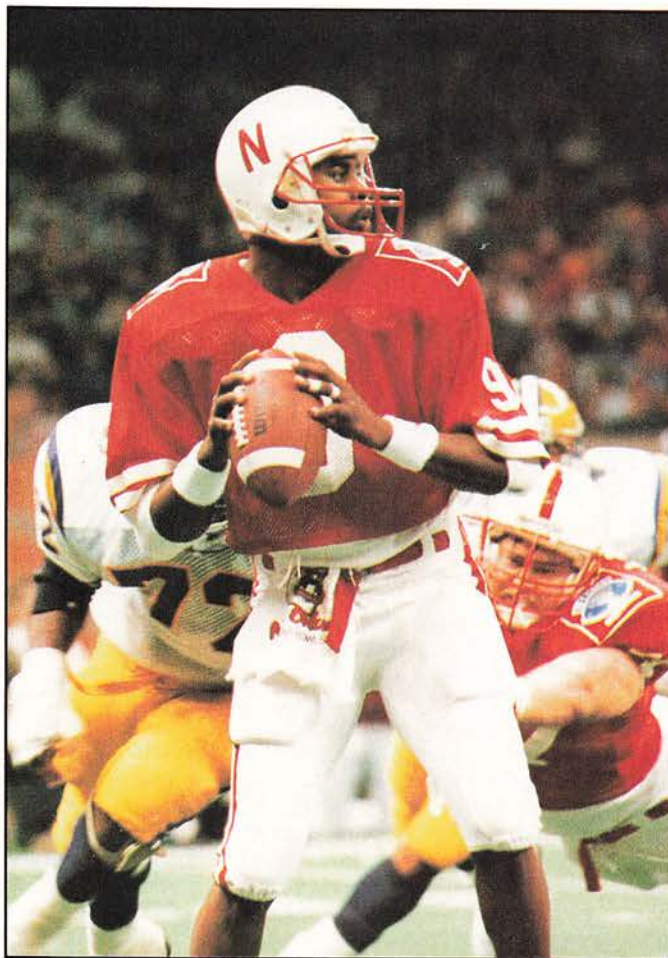
When All-American teams are selected, the stats which count are seldom wins and losses. Winning post-season honors is an uphill struggle.

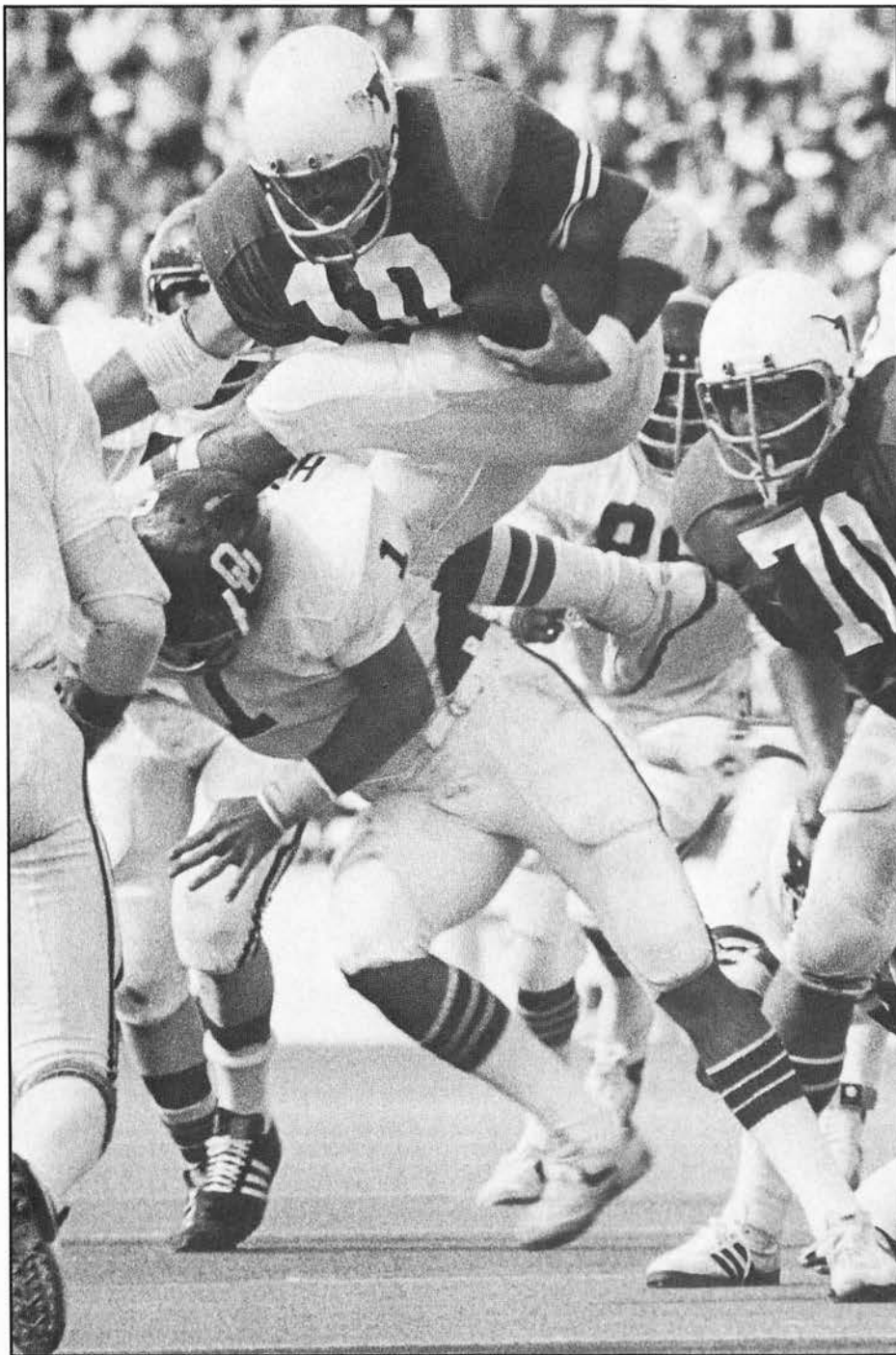
Plunkett's fantastic passing stats. He just got the ball in the end zone."

Because these numbers often loom larger than the men who produce them, Taylor and other half-runners/half-passers like him are squeezed, like square pegs, into the traditional round holes of college football statistics. The drop-back passer fits a clearly defined mold; compared to the mongrel option QB, he's a pure breed. And pure breeds are judged on standard criteria like shape of ears, length of tail and fur color — except in the case of quarterbacks, it's always been completion percentage, TDs and passing yards.

So, why do option quarterbacks

Steve Taylor won the game and the battle of quarterbacks in the Sugar Bowl.





Marty Akins (10) of Texas is one of only two option quarterbacks to earn All-American honors.

keep track of. Let's be honest. If you start devising complicated statistics just for option quarterbacks, nobody's going to know what the hell you're talking about."

Sports fans these days are talking, however, about Marvelous Marino and Sizzling Simms of pro football, the land of Air Wars. That passing excitement has swept college ball, where for the past five years, Division I teams have gained more yards passing than running (the average team passed for 185 yards and ran for 168 in 1986). Recent option quar-

terbacks, including Gill, are victims of poor timing during the era of wingbacks like Jim McMahon, John Elway, Bernie Kosar and Vinnie Testaverde, all of whom (except for Vincent) have gone on to become millionaires and media pets in pro football.

For option quarterbacks who fight hand-to-hand for their yards, that's an ominous trend; one that seems to make it hardly worthwhile to expend the colossal effort.

"He takes a lot of punishment," says Broyles. "He's the most unselfish player on the team. He knows he's not

going to be a pro quarterback. He's success oriented. He's team oriented."

It's the option QB who typifies what amateur athletics are about.

"They are always looking at the higher goal — winning," says former OU quarterback and current sports broadcaster Dean Blevins. "They don't think about individual honors at all. Their offense is not geared to how many yards they gain, but to how many yards the team gains. If the fullback play is wide open all day, then the fullback will harvest. If the pitch is there, then the halfbacks get the yards."

By being more "me" oriented and specializing as a running back or pure drop-back passer, such athletes could greatly increase their value as professionals.

"Option guys get caught in the middle," says writer Norris Anderson, 22-year veteran of the *Sporting News*. "Some of them could probably be superstars as runners, or as passers. But it's hard when you do both."

And few do. Mildren eventually played safety in the pros after leaving Oklahoma. Akins never did play pro ball and Gill is currently playing pro baseball after a stint in the Canadian Football League.

Gill's timing may have been off, but that's in the past. On the other hand, January 7th of 1986 (Taylor's birthday) was a perfect time for an option quarterback to be born.

"Option football is coming back," says Broyles, "and you're going to see those quarterbacks get more attention." That brutish old option game that Darrell Royal perfected at Texas with the Wishbone in the late '60s is chic stuff in the late 1980s. Trendy.

Let's not fool ourselves that this increased interest stems from Kansas and Missouri switching to the Wishbone following the '86 season. But they've got the right idea. Colorado's two-year success with the 'Bone has certainly caught attention. Mostly, though, the college football world is taking notice of always-fashionable (even when they're stinking up the joint) Notre Dame.

Passers may be exciting, but running teams continue to be winners. Of the Top 15 Division I-A rushing teams in 1986, 10 went to bowls. It's a Who's Who list: OU, Nebraska, Arkansas, Air Force and even Colorado. Those

were just the option teams. Clemson, Alabama, North Carolina, Georgia, Auburn and Penn State found other ways to run up their yardage. The Top 15 passing list, however, reads like Who's That? Oregon State, Oregon, UTEP, Wake Forest, Cincinnati and Utah are leaders in passing yards. But that's about all. Only four of those top passing teams went to bowl games.

Except for Miami in 1983 and BYU in 1984, passing teams haven't completed the ultimate pass, the highest team honor — a national title. At least that's the case since Texas triple-optioned its way to No. 1 in 1969. Even the greatest passers of our time — Elway, Doug Flutie, Testaverde — never won the national crown. Glaringly, Testaverde bumbled back-to-back chances to win it all. The college passing game's armour has been tarnished.

And while throwing the ball has been exciting and trendy, trends change.

"Cycles are common in college football," says Wright. "Running was dominant in the mid-1970s and, now, passing has been on the increase for almost a decade.

"Winning is so important, though, and a lot of coaches can just look at the statistics and see that the passing



Kansas moved Nolan Cromwell (9) from the secondary to quarterback in the wishbone where he was one of the best ever.

teams are generally not the big winners. Having an exciting offense is only going to take you so far. If you're a fan, what would you like to see your team do: win or lose with flair?"

No matter how distasteful Oklahoma is to many Husker fans, no one can deny the Sooners have contributed to recent option excitement, especially their All-America tight end Keith Jackson. He's spectacular. He's a sure-shot pro. He's a benchmark by which high school stars measure themselves. Most of all, he's proven that receivers in an option offense can survive and even flourish; when an option team throws, people freak out. It's generally a big play for big yards.

Two of the nation's best high school receivers — Danny Lohmeire of Omaha and Nate Turner of Chicago — have come to Nebraska to try and duplicate Jackson's success. And why not? If they went to BYU, they'd be

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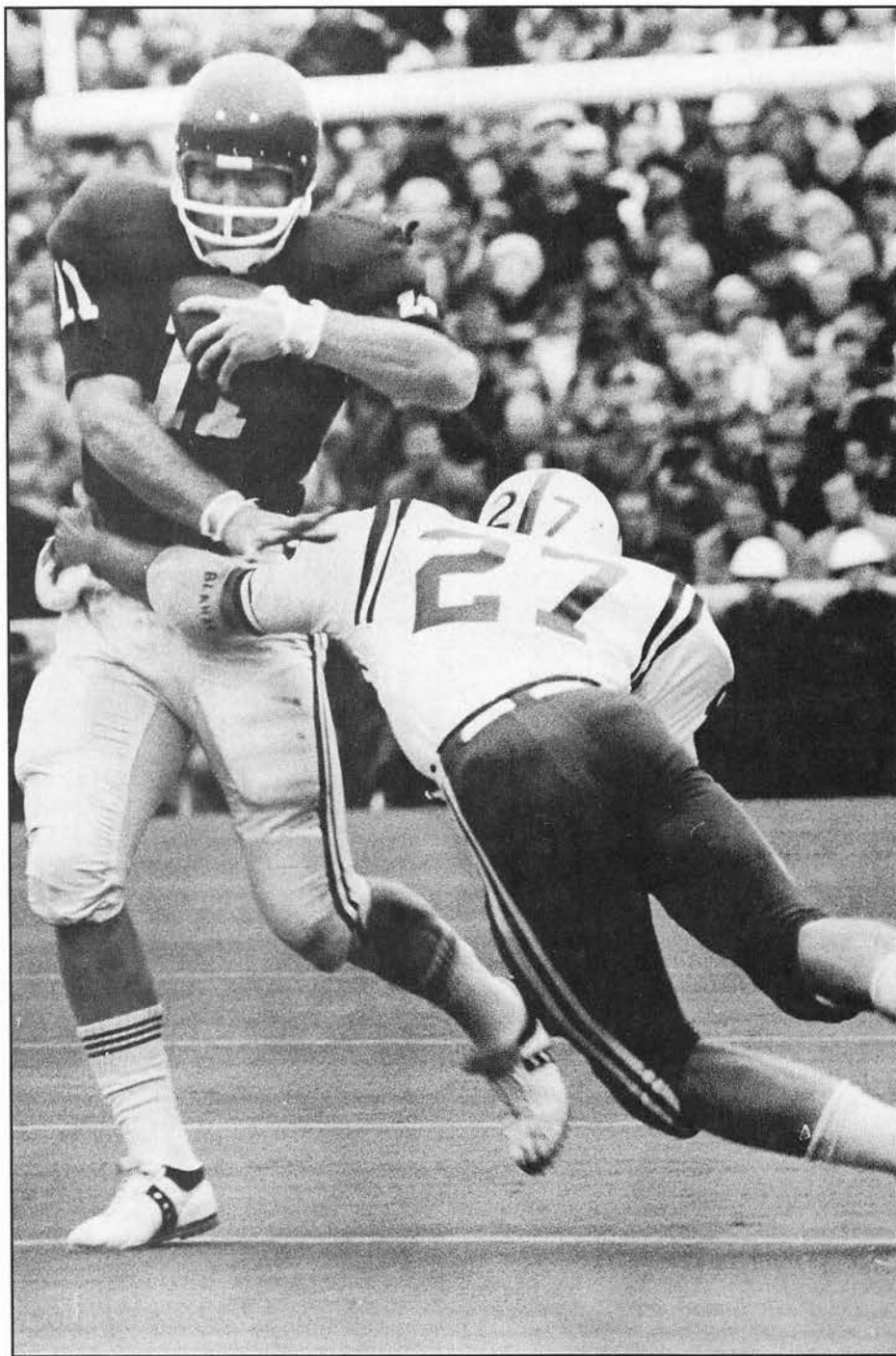
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Oklahoma's Jack Mildren (11) may have been the best of the wishbone quarterbacks, but he was winless in three tries against Nebraska. Joe Blahak is the NU defender.

catching ball-control, five-yarders and getting smashed by safeties after most passes. It's likely they'll be scrambling in the open field and thinking "End Zone!" when they touch the ball in Nebraska's option offense.

Would you believe the land of dry holes and oil gluts — Texas — is also having a dramatic effect on option football? After the seventh grade, Texas school boys are prohibited by law from going to football camps. If you're caught, you're ineligible. Even if a young Texan snuck all the way up

to Lincoln for Coach Tom Osborne's football school, he would be barred from playing in his home state. The catch is that camps help passing quarterbacks the most.

"Just look at California," recruiting specialist Max Emfinger says emphatically. "They have summer PASSING leagues. Here are these high school guys playing in seven-man passing leagues. And people wonder why the Pac-10 throws so much.

"I'd love to send my son to a football camp, but because we live in Houston, I can't."

Texas high school coaches, therefore, have traditionally favored the running game. And in the state that is the undisputed high school football factory of America, the running game rules.

"Coaches know the option game is relatively safe, effective and easy to teach," Emfinger says. "That's why you have so many fine option quarterbacks coming out of Texas. If the law was changed, I think Texas coaches would probably pass more if they had kids refining their throwing skills in camps. As it is, I don't think it's (state law) going to change any time soon, and when college coaches come down here to recruit, they're going to find more great option quarterbacks than throwers."

But it's the sports writers and broadcasters who will mostly determine the all-star fate of option quarterbacks. Even if there are more of them and they play for winning teams, can they overcome the statistical barrier?

"Yes," insists Nissensen, "people like Taylor and Holieway have a legitimate shot at first-team All-America because of the teams they play for. They're winners. They'll get lots of exposure. The key is for them to get the ball in the end zone, make big plays and, most of all, they've got to have timing on their side. If 1987 is a down year for passing quarterbacks, which I think it will be, then Taylor and Holieway will have a good shot before their careers are over."

Despite all this renewed interest in the option game and the field generals who run it, team success remains the top prize in college football. Tom Osborne doesn't scour the country trying to recruit kids so he can polish their Hesiman or Maxwell trophies for them. But even with the team emphasis, college football is chock-full of voting, polling and opinions; that's the fun of college ball. And opinions are like noses and All-American teams — everybody's got one. For the first time in a long time, option quarterbacks, like Nebraska's Taylor, have a legitimate chance to not only help their teams to glory but to also steal a little for themselves. ♦

Husker Pursuit

Tom Osborne is 50 and Nebraska has had 25 straight winning seasons; that's a lot of exciting football. To give fans an informative chance to test their Nebraska football knowledge, here's a 10-question version of **Husker Pursuit**. The questions start easy but get tougher.

1. Which two Big Eight teams held Nebraska under 30 points in 1983 when the Huskers averaged over 50 points per game? A) Colorado and OSU, B) Colorado and OU, C) OU and OSU, D) OU and New Mexico.

2. What was the bowl game that Osborne's first Husker team played in? A) Orange, B) Cotton, C) Gator, D) Fiesta.

3. Who is the only Husker to be chosen as the first player in the NFL draft? A) Mike Rozier, B) Irving Fryar, C) Johnny Rodgers, D) Lloyd Cardwell.

4. Which team won the national championship in 1972 and dethroned Nebraska (9-2-1) after back-to-back titles? A) Alabama, B) Notre Dame, C) Michigan, D) USC.

5. Although the Huskers missed a third national championship in 1972, they set a school single-season record that stands today. What is it? A) Most passing yards, B) Lowest interception percentage, C) Most first downs, D) Fewest passing yards by opponent.

6. In 1983, Mike Rozier had four 200-yard games on his way to a 2,148-yard season. What made that feat even more spectacular? A) Each game was against a Top 20 team, B) He was injured in each game, C) He did it in consecutive games, D) He had less than 20 carries in each game.

7. Which current Husker assistant coach also played for Bob Devaney at Nebraska? A) Milt Tenopir as a defensive tackle in 1962, B) Charlie McBride as a punter in 1962, C) George Darlington as a split end in 1967, D) Frank Solich as a fullback in 1965.

8. After graduating from Hastings College, Osborne played three years of pro football with Washington and San Francisco. What position did he play? A) Quarterback, B) Flanker, C) Free safety, D) Defensive end.

9. How old is arch-rival Barry Switzer? A) 47, B) 49, C) 51, D) 53.

10. Bob Devaney's first Wyoming team did something more times in one season than the Huskers would do in 11 years under his leadership. What was it? A) Play tie games B) Pass for

300 yards in a game C) Go to the Gotham Bowl, D) Lose to Colorado.

ANSWERS

1. C) OSU and OU. Nebraska beat the Cowboys, 14-10, and stopped Oklahoma, 28-21, during that 12-1 season. Other than those two games, the Huskers (led by Mike Rozier, Irving Fryar and Turner Gill) averaged over 55 points per contest.

2. B) Cotton. Nebraska beat Coach Darrell Royal's Texas Longhorns, 19-3.

3. B) Wingback Irving Fryar was the first player chosen in the 1984 NFL draft.

4. D) John McKay and the USC Trojans took top honors in both the AP and UPI polls, while Nebraska was ranked fourth in AP and ninth in UPI.

5. A) Most passing yards. With David Humm as quarterback, the Huskers passed for 2,431 yards for an average of 221 yards per game.

6. C) He did it consecutively. Rozier ran for 227 yards (on 23 carries) against K-State, followed with 212 yards (on 26 carries) versus Iowa

State, posted a career and school record of 285 yards (on 31 carries) against Kansas then finished the regular season with 205 yards (32 carries) in a 28-21 win over Oklahoma.

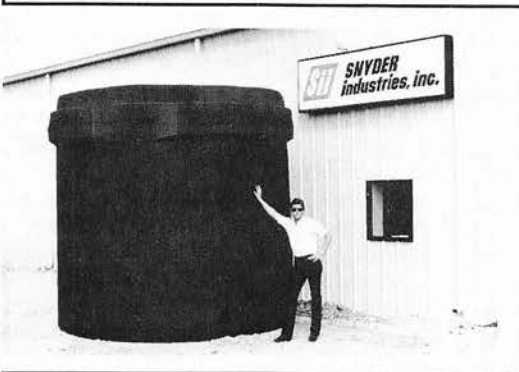
7. D) Frank Solich as a fullback in 1965. That year, he was All-Big Eight and set a then-school record of 205 yards rushing (against Air Force). His playing weight at fullback was 160.

8. B) Flanker. Although he played quarterback at Hastings, Osborne was switched to receiver as he played two years with the Washington Redskins and one season with the 49ers.

9. B) 49. Switzer was born in 1937 on October 5; a day that will live in infamy.

10. A) play tie games. Devaney and the Wyoming Cowboys posted a 4-3-3 record, and in his 11 seasons with Nebraska, he tied only two games. The Cowboys deadlocked with Utah State (10-10), Brigham Young (0-0) and Air Force (7-7) in 1957. Devaney's only ties at Nebraska were with USC (21-21) in the 1970 national champion campaign and Iowa State (23-23) in 1972. ♦

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The Huskers should win an Oscar for their recent lead role in the annual remake of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers."

This year's recruiting performance was packed with drama: underdogs, good guys, bad guys, traitors and a plot with a thousand twists. And it climaxed with a very happy ending.

Nebraska signed 20 high schoolers and two junior college transfers, with all but a pair giving verbal commitments before the February 11 letter-of-intent day. Because of that early success, the Wednesday signing day went smoothly as on-campus Recruiting Coordinator Dave Gillespie mostly kept track of follow-up activities. By day's end, Nebraska had enough all-stars to rank this year's class as one of the best in recent Husker history.

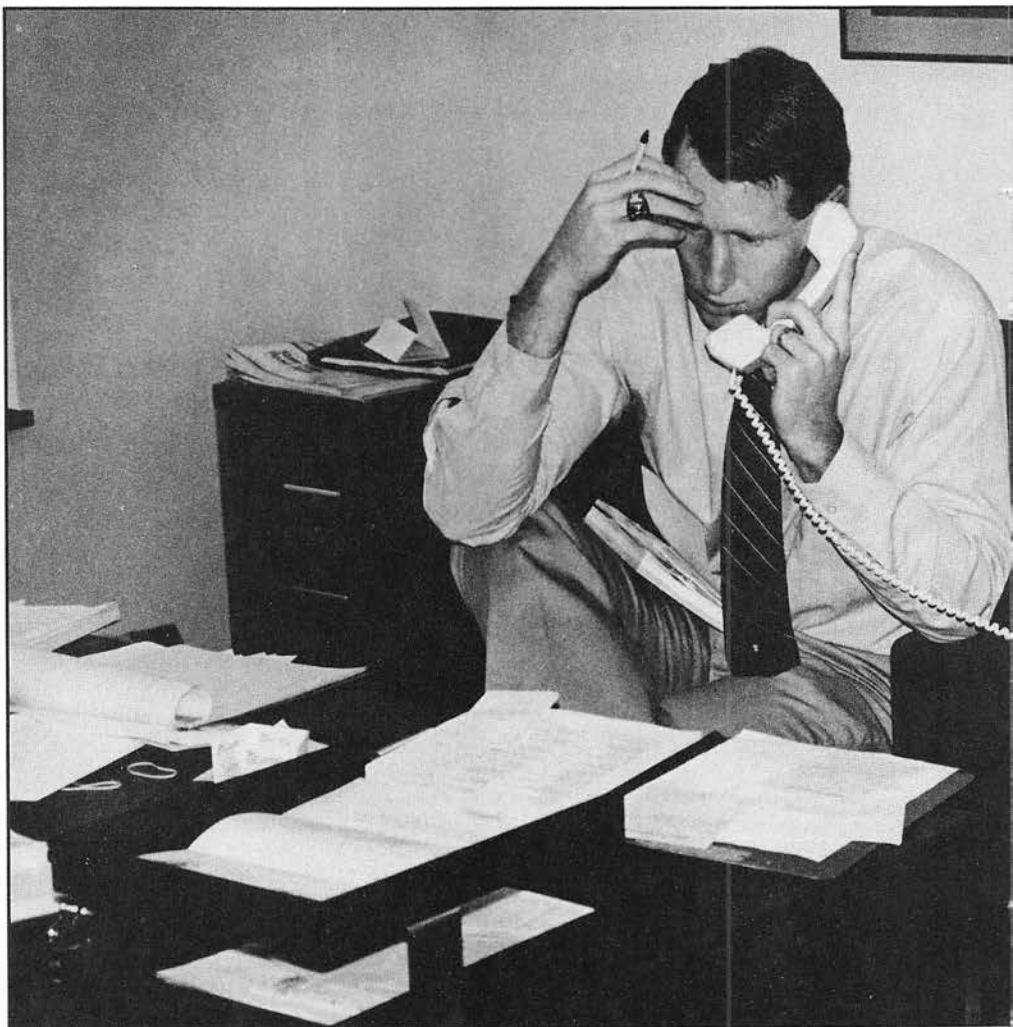
But drama continued into Thursday as Coach Tom Osborne and off-campus Recruiting Coordinator Jack Pierce snatched All-Everything quarterback Mickey Joseph from the jaws of Barry Switzer and Oklahoma. Rated by *USA Today* as the top quarterback in America, Joseph delayed his decision, like star performers often do, before signing with Nebraska that afternoon and ending a see-saw battle between the nation's top option teams.

Another dramatic chase scene stretched through the weekend before Omaha running back Leodis Flowers (also a *Parade* All-American) signed with the Huskers.

Even without Joseph, 5-foot-10 and 170 pounds, Nebraska would have had a good recruiting class on its hands, but winning the Marrero, Louisiana signal caller and Flowers will be remembered as a milestone.

It was the first time since the spring of 1985 that Nebraska whipped OU head-to-head on a key player. That year, Switzer was after Broderick "Sandman" Thomas, now an All-Big Eight defensive end from Houston. Switzer put Thomas to sleep, however, with talk about switching him to a down lineman. The OU boss insisted Thomas would star as a defensive tackle, a personality clash ensued and Thomas cast his ballot with Nebraska.

The last time UNL outdueled OU for a quarterback was when Turner Gill resisted temptation and came to Lincoln. In 1982, the effervescent Sooner coach ran toward Nebraska's sideline at halftime of their shootout in Lincoln and called to Gill. "Turner!" he barked with a smile. "I told you to come to Oklahoma. I told you I'd change the offense for you. I did it for Marcus (then OU star Dupree). I would have done it for you." Gill did it to OU, instead, as Nebraska never lost



Huskers Strike "Gold"

a game to the Sooners during Gill's varsity career.

Concerning Joseph, it was the most aggressive and exhaustive personal recruiting effort by Osborne during his Nebraska career. He admitted that never before had he spent so much time personally recruiting one athlete. The same could almost be said of the OU camp.

Sooner recruiting ace Lucious Selmon, who snatched Dupree out of Philadelphia, Mississippi, worked on Joseph, and Switzer actually flew to Louisiana, spent the night at the Joseph home and flew back to Norman with the slender quarterback for his OU visit.

A joyful noise emanated from Norman after Joseph's visit, two weekends before before signing day, and OU seemed to edge ahead in the two-team race. Rumors spread like a western Oklahoma prairie fire that Joseph had verbally committed —

that he had boasted of showing the Huskers a thing or two.

Having hosted the Double-Grand quarterback (he had more than 1,000 yards rushing and passing as a senior) in Lincoln earlier, Nebraska coaches also got an enthusiastic response from Joseph. Osborne's ace-in-the-hole was a warm relationship with the lad's parents, and it ultimately overcame the glitz and showmanship of Switzerland.

"Coach Osborne was the turning point," Gillespie said.

Long before Joseph committed, though, Nebraska had verbal agreements with a score of fine athletes, and recruiting expert Max Emfinger of Houston rated the Husker catch in his Top 10. Other recruiting services ranked Nebraska in the Top 5. UNL even had a quarterback secured in case Joseph slipped away.

Talkative and enthusiastic Keithen McCant of Grand Prairie (Texas) High



Dave Gillespie is surrounded by the tools of a recruiting coordinator: telephone, computer, vcr, television and lots of lists.

School vowed allegiance to Nebraska while the Louisiana battle was still undecided.

Rated as the No. 2 option quarterback in Texas, McCant remained upbeat, confident and excited about his upcoming Nebraska career, despite the non-stop publicity surrounding Joseph. McCant was Eddie Murphy (a hit in his own right) compared to Joseph's Tom Cruise (the Top Gun).

"What are they going to do," Emfinger asked emphatically, "with two quarterbacks like that?"

Pleasant problems like that surfaced often as the recruiting season waned and verbal commitments mounted. A week before signing day, Nebraska had only a couple of scholarships left and more than a handful of star prospects still interested. On letter-of-intent eve, Joseph, Flowers, Anthony Ray (Wharton, Texas running back) and Emmitt Smith (Pensacola, Florida running back) still hadn't committed. Even after Smith chose Florida on Wednesday, and the Huskers landed Joseph on Friday,

they still had a shot at two standouts and really only wanted to give one last scholarship.

Flowers, who had earlier hinted he wanted to leave the state, snatched the last grant, bringing the 1987 recruiting class total to 22.

Ray was the odd man out and eventually signed with Baylor.

That dilemma came about as Nebraska hauled in its verbals from highly publicized players like wide receiver Nate Turner of Chicago, tight end Dan Lohmeire of Omaha, offensive tackle Brian Boerboom of Colorado Springs and linebacker Tim Herman of Lincoln.

The Huskers got pleasant surprises from previously untapped recruiting sources: Massachusetts and Chicago. Defensive tackle Joe Sims and end Mike Croel signed from Lincoln (Sudbury, Massachusetts) High School, where Croel was a state champ in the 100 and Sims was a deluxe pass rusher. From Chicago, Turner was rated by different recruiting newsletters as either the No. 1 or 2 receiver in the country. A good bet for wingback duty, Turner was joined from the Windy City by offensive lineman Wayne Keneipp, the most powerful Husker recruit with a 400-pound bench press to his credit.

Nebraska drew the ire of Colorado fans by stealing two Rocky Mountain studs: Boerboom and defensive back Tahaun Lewis, both of Doherty (Colorado Springs) High School.

Early, Late

Even without delayed signings by Joseph and Flowers, NU made big gains in recruiting wars.

By Mark Owens

1987 Husker Recruits

| Name | School | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Spd. |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------|------|-----|------|
| George Achola | Omaha Creighton Prep. | RB | 5-11 | 197 | 4.5 |
| Brian Boerboom | Colo. Springs Doherty | OL | 6-7 | 265 | 5.0 |
| Brian Brown | Indianola Republican Valley | DT | 6-7 | 225 | 4.9 |
| Bryan Carpenter | Coffeyville (Ks.) J.C. | RB | 5-10 | 200 | 4.4 |
| Reggie Cooper | Slidel, La. | DE | 6-3 | 202 | 4.7 |
| Jeff Chaney | Friona, Tx. | OT | 6-2 | 245 | 5.1 |
| Mike Croel | Sudbury, Ms., Lincoln | DE | 6-3 | 210 | 4.5 |
| Pat Englebert | Columbus, Neb., Scotus | DT | 6-3 | 230 | 4.9 |
| Leodis Flowers | Omaha Central | RB | 5-11 | 190 | 4.5 |
| Chris Garrett | Snyder, Tex. | DE | 6-3 | 217 | 4.7 |
| Tim Herman | Lincoln H.S. | LB | 6-6 | 240 | 4.8 |
| Tim Jackson | Coffeyville (Ks.) J.C. | DB | 6-0 | 195 | 4.5 |
| Mickey Joseph | Merrero, La., Shaw | QB | 5-11 | 175 | 4.5 |
| Wayne Keneipp | Chicago Leo | OL | 6-3 | 240 | 4.9 |
| Daryl Leise | Omaha Creighton Prep | LB | 6-3 | 215 | 4.9 |
| Tahaun Lewis | Colo. Springs Doherty | DB | 5-11 | 175 | 4.5 |
| Dan Lohmeier | Omaha Creighton Prep | TE | 6-5 | 222 | 4.8 |
| Keithen McCant | Grand Prairie, Tex. | QB | 6-2 | 180 | 4.7 |
| Joe Sims | Sudbury, Ms., Lincoln | LB | 6-4 | 230 | 4.8 |
| William Thomas | Houston Madison | DB | 6-2 | 170 | 4.6 |
| Nate Turner | Chicago Mt. Carmel | WB | 6-2 | 205 | 4.5 |
| Erik Wiegert | Fremont Bergan | DE | 6-4 | 242 | 5.0 |

"There's actually a bigger Colorado booster club here than in Denver," said Bob Page, foster parent to Lewis. "Bill McCartney and his staff really pushed the state-wide loyalty idea but it really didn't mean much to Tahaun because we've only lived here for 18 months and Brian's family has only been in Colorado for six years."

From the icy mountains, Nebraska put the triple-whammy on balmy Louisiana by also nabbing its top defensive player, safety Reggie Cooper of Slidell High School. First, Nebraska trounced LSU in the Sugar Bowl, then snatched the state's best players on either side of the ball.

By signing such a variety of out-of-state players, it became obvious that the much-publicized NCAA probation at Nebraska last fall had little effect on the national recruiting trail. "We heard very little of it, if any at all," said Gillespie.

What Nebraska coaches did constantly hear about was the circus atmosphere in Omaha as Switzer and OU staffers converged on Nebraska to recruit Flowers. The weekend before

signing day, Switzer flew into Omaha and entertained sports reporters with his lively comments about Flowers' potential career at Oklahoma. Immediately the entire state was aglow with Sooner red and allegations flew that Switzer had violated NCAA rules by talking about a player.

OU Recruiting Coordinator Scott Hill had indicated early that he was making a personal crusade to get Flowers out of Nebraska. At the same time, Osborne's commitment was to win Omaha. Whether in print or on the air waves, Nebraska sports fans were seeing red.

Although NCAA and Big Eight officials agreed they would look into the matter of Switzer's questionable comments, the anxiety quickly subsided when it became obvious no action would be taken before signing day and that neither school would gain an advantage from the escapade.

One recruiting development that certainly wasn't an advantage for Nebraska was the resignation in late-January of receivers coach Gene Huey and freshman coach Scott

Downing; both took positions at Wyoming. "Scott wasn't involved with recruiting any more than looking at films and helping evaluate walk-on prospects," Gillespie said. "But with Gene, obviously some kids who liked him and were interested in us immediately lost interest. None of them, though, eventually signed with Wyoming."

Huey worked the fertile recruiting grounds of Texas, and the slack was taken up by Pierce and defensive ends coach Tony Samuel.

"Fortunately, the move came after we had already gotten a lot of verbal commitments, so it didn't hurt too bad at all," Gillespie explained.

From Texas, the Huskers pulled a quartet of signees: offensive linemen Jeff Chaney, defensive end Chris Garrett, quarterback Keithen McCant of Grand Prairie and defensive back William Thomas.

Of that group, Chaney has been called Nebraska's diamond-in-the-rough by Emfinger. "He wasn't an All-American or as highly recruited as some of their other players, but Ne-

Talk With Osborne Helped Flowers

By Mark Owens

At 6:40 a.m., like a thousand times before, Leodis Flowers stirred himself out of bed after his usual seven hours of restful sleep. It was Monday, a school day, Presidents' Day, in fact. But that didn't mean school would be closed. It was cold enough and cloudy enough to snow, but in Nebraska, it's not unusual for snow to threaten anytime during February. Why should February 16 be any different?

By 7:25 a.m., Flowers was ready for school. Heading out the door toward his sister Tonya's Grand Prix, he wore his standard outfit: slacks, sweatshirt, Reeboks. The engine turned over smoothly and he drove to Central High School alone and a little hungry because he had never gotten into the habit of eating breakfast.

What a joy...driving to school. If there was one place in the entire state of Nebraska where Flowers would not hear a phone ring, it would be in Tonya's Grand Prix.

There, sitting alone behind the wheel, Flowers could not be called by recruiters. He could think about football or decide not to think about football. In Tonya's Grand Prix, on the

way to school, no one could bug him. Not Oklahoma. Not Iowa. Not Nebraska. People would want to talk football soon enough.

First-hour class started at 8 a.m. and Jim Martin began to teach consumer math. Flowers liked this class because Martin was his basketball coach. This was a good class. In fact, it was really starting off to be a good day. No one had asked when he was going to sign a letter-of-intent, yet; usually they did. But February 16 appeared to be a low-key day — a chance for Flowers to be just another CHS senior.

By lunchtime, that changed.

Coach Tom Osborne came to Omaha and found Flowers at lunch with CHS football coach William Reed, who had cafeteria duty.

At 11:30 a.m., Osborne and Flowers went into Reed's office to talk alone. Shortly, Osborne left.

School is a strange place for something like that to happen. At home, Flowers could have shared his feelings with Clarence, Sr., his dad, or Vera, his mother. Here it was, perhaps the biggest day of his life, and he couldn't reach out instantly to his parents.

Instead, Flowers and Reed shared their ideas about football and people. The relationship between a coach and player has many ups and downs, and in Flowers' recent football quandries the two had risen very, very high and sunk very, very low together. Here was a man Flowers looked up to, but by all rights if he believed half of the press clippings in his scrapbook, Flowers could actually expect that same man to someday look up to him for his accomplishments on the football field. The two men talked about whose football field it would be. No decision was made.

In his fourth-hour class, weight training, Flowers was ready. Not that it was planned. He had simply heard enough and had thought enough, and he was ready.

During study hall, Flowers called his mother, and Vera was happy for her son. Mostly, though, she was a relieved parent. She was the first person to hear it from Leodis' lips and she was very happy...very relieved.

By 2:10 p.m., the young celebrity slipped into the privacy of his home and, with his father, signed a letter-of-intent. Assistant coaches Frank Sol-



Leodis Flowers

braska always seems to do a good, thorough job of finding those kids."

The Huskers signed a solid in-state crew including running back George Achola and defensive end Daryl Leise of Creighton (Omaha) Prep, defensive tackle Brian Brown of Indianola Republic Valley, defensive lineman Pat Englebert of Scotus (Columbus) High School and defensive end Erik Wiegert of Fremont Bergan.

From the juco ranks, running back Bryan Carpenter and defensive back Tim Jackson are already on campus, having transferred from Coffeyville (Kansas) Junior College.

The breakdown by positions is as follows:

Quarterbacks — two; running backs — three; wide outs/tight ends — two; offensive line — three; defensive down linemen — two; defensive ends — five; linebackers — two; defensive backs — three and, no kickers were recruited.

The logjam at defensive end, however, should clear up next fall when coaches get a closer look.

"Right now," Gillespie explained, "we have several players who are, more than anything, just great athletes. They could eventually play any number of positions on either side of the ball."

Nebraska also encountered one player who tried to walk both sides of a fence. Offensive lineman Mark Blodgett (Humble, Texas) verbally committed to Nebraska in January only to back out and eventually sign with Oklahoma. Blodgett confessed later that he received a phone call shortly after disclaiming the UNL commitment, and Osborne delivered a stern message about the virtues of keeping promises.

Blodgett explained that Nebraska was his first on-campus visit and that he had no idea other schools would be interested.

Academically, this year's class looks to be in good shape, with no Proposition 48 candidates, according to Gillespie. ♦

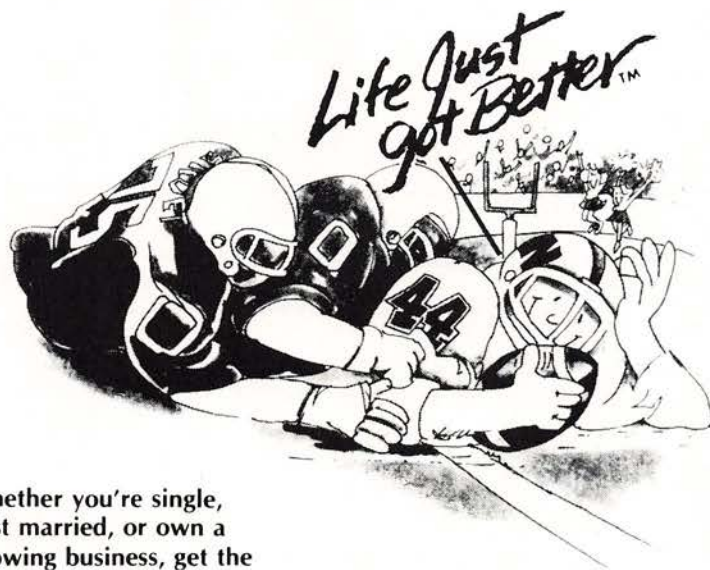
Over Hump

ich and Charlie McBride would return to Lincoln, letter in hand.

Basketball practice started at 3 p.m., and Coach Martin announced to Flowers' teammates that he was a Husker. He shook hands, practiced and came home at 5 p.m. The family ate a dinner of steak and cabbage. Tonya and older brother Clarence, Jr. had never been particularly excited about their brother's recruiting problem or anything to do with football for that matter.

After dinner, Leodis Flowers wasn't particularly excited either — about much of anything. It had been a serious, straight-faced sort of day. It wasn't any fun telling his friend Evan Simpson, who had signed with Iowa, that they wouldn't play together. There's just not a lot of joy in seeing a friend somewhat shocked and not exactly thrilled about what he did.

But at least the phone wasn't ringing at home. It was quiet enough to get some homework done. Quiet enough to drift off for a short nap around 8 p.m. If February 16 was memorable for nothing else, Flowers would get a few hours extra sleep; a moment or two of unusual and much appreciated rest. ♦



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MEET THE NEWEST HUSKERS

GEORGE ACHOLA

School: Creighton Prep (Omaha)
Junior Jays

Position: running back

Height: 5-11

Weight: 197

Speed: 4.5

Bench press: 335

Years started: two (three letters)

Hobbies: reading, weight lifting

Academic interest: business

1986 team record: 11-1. Prep

won the Nebraska Class A state championship.

On the field: Two-year all-state performer with 1,015 yards rushing and 16 TDs as a senior. He gained 1,333 yards and 15 TDs as a junior. That year against Lincoln Southeast, he developed into a complete back by running, passing, blocking and catching his way to a career game. Achola finished with 155 yards rushing and two touchdowns against a tough opponent, led by another Husker recruit, linebacker Tim Herman.

Other sports: track. He specializes in the 100, 200 and 400.

Why Nebraska? "The coaching staff is excellent and it's really a good academic school. I like their graduate courses in business, plus it's just a good place to grow." Recruited by Dan Young.

Other choices: Arizona State, Notre Dame

Junior Jay Coach Tom Jaworski says: "George has that good combination of strength and speed. He can really splatter people. He has worked hard in the weight room to build up his endurance, speed and strength. He's super coachable."

Gillespie says: "George missed some action with shoulder and ankle problems in 1986, but it's not a problem now. It showed he could play with some pain and is tough. He's intense, intelligent with good speed."

Born September 3, 1968. Son of Paul and Helen Achola.



On the field: Made all-state despite missing half the season with a shoulder separation. Still averaged 13 tackles per game as a senior. He is a three-time all-conference performer, and opponents rarely ran to his side of the field. Brown was the first freshman to ever start at Republican Valley.

Years started: four (four letters)

Other sports: basketball, track. He has thrown the shot put 42'5".

Hobbies: golf, basketball

Academic interest: physical therapy

School activities: class president

Other choices: OU, Iowa

Why Nebraska? "I've always wanted to play there — it's simply the best school. And I also like the idea of going to a bowl game every year." Recruited by John Melton.

Mustang Coach Larry Brown says: "Brian's a heady player and has great quickness for his size. He's got the speed to run down backs. But naturally he'll need a lot of work on strength conditioning because his shoulder injuries in high school have kept him out of the weight room."

Gillespie says: "I think the shoulder injury is pretty much taken care of. Brian's already visited with our doctors and is on an exercise program now to strengthen the shoulder. Brian's got excellent size and foot speed along with overall athletic ability."

Son of Ron and Shirley Brown. Born Feb. 6, 1969.

BRYAN CARPENTER

School: Coffeyville (Ks.)

Junior College Red Ravens

Position: running back

Height: 5-10

Weight: 200

Speed: 4.4

Bench press: 330

1986 team record: 9-2

Years started: one (one letter)

Other sports: track (sprints)

On the field: honorable mention all-conference in the CJC wishbone offense, where he really started to click in the last five games. Carpenter finished with 900 yards rushing, including 212 against Butler. Signed with Nebraska in 1985, but left the team after a week of practice. He'll be a sophomore in eligibility next fall. Carpenter is already on the UNL campus and working in the conditioning program.

Academic interest: undecided

Why Nebraska? "Of course, the winning tradition and great facilities. Plus, I was surprised and happy that Coach Osborne called me this past fall and asked if I would like to try again. I feel much better about my career now."

Other choices: none

Coach Dick Foster says: "Bryan should be a good fullback for Nebraska next fall. He's team oriented, unselfish and likes to lift weights. He should add an exciting dimension at fullback with his great explosiveness. He's already familiar with the option game because we ran the wishbone."

Gillespie says: "Hits holes very quickly and accelerates very well. We hope he'll fit right in there as a fullback in our trap schemes."

Born July 20, 1966. Son of Ed Linder.



BRIAN BOERBOOM

(pronounced BOR-boom)

School: Doherty (Colorado Springs)

Spartans

Position: offensive line

Height: 6-7

Weight: 265

Speed: 5.0

Bench press: 280

1986 team record: 10-2. Spartans reached the state quarter finals.

On the field: Bally All-American. Plus he made the Colorado all-state team and usual all-neighborhood teams. Boerboom is considered the top lineman in Colorado. A consistent performer, he constantly faced the opponent's best player and still dominated the line of scrimmage.

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: basketball, track, wrestling

Academic interest: undecided

Why Nebraska? "I liked their overall football facility and great winning tradition. Plus, I hope there's a chance I can play early." Recruited by Milt Tenopir.

Other choices: UCLA, Colorado

Spartan Coach Harold Hamilton says: "Brian's outstanding off the ball. He stays low, which is impressive for a guy his height. He's got great feet and can really sustain a block, which is important in the wishbone offense we use."

Gillespie says: "Great size, mobility and aggressiveness. Great tools. And he has the potential to really fill out and get more muscular."

Son of Ben and Joan Boerboom. Born March 26, 1969.



BRIAN BROWN

School: Republican Valley
(Indianola, Neb.) Mustangs

Position: defensive tackle

Height: 6-7

Weight: 225

Speed: 4.9

Bench press: not available

1986 team record: 7-3. Mustangs lost in the first round of Class C playoffs.



REGGIE COOPER

School: Slidell (La.) H.S.

Position: safety/def. end

Height: 6-3

Weight: 202

Speed: 4.7

Bench press: not available

1986 team record: 13-1. Slidell was

Class 4-A state runnerup.

Years started: two (three letters)

Academic interest: undecided

On the field: *College Sport Magazine* All-American and the "most valuable defensive player" in 4-A. Cooper registered 87 total tackles, 52 unassisted, four QB sacks, three fumble recoveries and an interception in nine regular season games. He added three interceptions in one playoff game. He is slated to play in the Louisiana all-star game in July and his jersey number (2) was retired.

Other sports: basketball, track. He made honorable mention all-

MEET THE NEWEST HUSKERS

state in basketball as a junior and was second in the state in the high jump at 6'8".

Why Nebraska? "Everyone's a winner at Nebraska, from the players to coaches and the fans. Everything looks great to me." Recruited by Jack Pierce.

Other choices: Tulane, LSU, Houston

Slidell Coach Wayne Grubbs says: "He is your classic, all-purpose athlete. There's not much he can't do on the field, but his aggressiveness and confidence make him an outstanding defensive player."

Gillespie says: "Great athlete! There are a lot of positions he could play. Very versatile."

Son of Mr. and Mrs. John Cooper.

JEFF CHANEY

School: Friona (Tx.) Chieftans

Position: offensive tackle

Height: 6-2

Weight: 245

Speed: 5.1

Bench press: 300

1986 team record: 9-3. Friona reached the area playoffs.

Years started: two (two letters)

Hobbies: hunting, fishing, skiing

Other sports: track. Chaney throws the shot and discus.

On the field: All-State in Class 3-A as well as first-team all-district for two years. Named to the *Amarillo News-Globe's* "Super Team", he played both offensive and defensive tackle. Against Tulie High School this past year, Friona faced fourth-and-short against the pre-season district favorites. Running behind Chaney's hole, the Chieftans converted with a 20-yard blast, went on to score and upset Tulie.

Academic interest: sports medicine

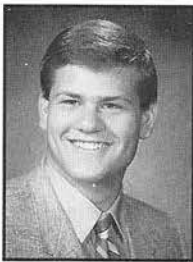
Why Nebraska? "Because of their reputation for having the best offensive line in the country. Plus, I was impressed by the coaches. I really like Coach Tenopir. I also liked the good freshman program they have." Recruited by Milt Tenopir.

Other choices: Texas Tech, OU, Baylor

Friona Coach Tommy Moss says: "Jeff's very strong in the legs. Inside the 10-yard line, he would just come off the ball and drive people back. He's got a lot of desire; he wants to outdo his older brother Mike, who played small college football as a tackle."

Gillespie says: "Very strong with good feet. Very good technique. He's the first player at Friona in 13 years to get a Division I scholarship."

Son of Mike and Betty Chaney. Born December 11, 1968.



triple jumped 45'10". Track coach McMahon says the Warriors will be favored to win the state championship and a healthy Croel could contribute as many as 30-35 points.

Hobbies: surfing, skiing, art (air brush)

Academic interest: commercial art and business

Why Nebraska? "I really like the academic programs there, plus I like the chance to play offense." Recruited by Frank Solich

Other choices: Penn State, Arizona, Syracuse

Lincoln Coach Tom Lopez says: "Mike has exceptional quickness to go with great straight-ahead speed. He's a big-play person. A devastating pass rusher. Very aggressive."

Gillespie says: "Great hands, speed and size. Very aggressive and just a great athlete who could play on either side of the ball. Penn State wanted him badly."

Born June 6, 1969. Son of Philip and Susanne Croel.



PAT ENGLEBERT

School: Scotus (Columbus,

Neb.) Chamrocks

Position: def. tackle

Height: 6-3

Weight: 230

Speed: 4.9

Bench press: 255

1986 team record: 5-4

On the field: made Class B All-State for two years and All-Class All-State as a senior. He dominated every one-on-one matchup of his career, and against Aurora in the state playoffs two years ago he made his mark by chasing down offensive backs from behind several times.

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: basketball, baseball, track. Pat throws the shot and discus during the spring.

Hobbies: fishing

Academic interest: civil engineering

School activities: vice president of letterman's club, Columbus Squires.

Why Nebraska? "They've got an excellent coaching staff, and it's only 70 miles from home. It's a great overall program, plus my brothers Mike and Dave go there."

Scotus Coach Jim Peutz says: "He's got good speed, intelligence and athletic ability — he's the best basketball player in town (15 points per game)."

Gillespie says: "Good feet and moves well. Pat really understands the game well and has good intelligence."

Born Oct. 19, 1968. Son of Germain and Kathleen Englebert.

MIKE CROEL

School: Lincoln (Sudbury,

Mass.) Warriors

Position: wingback/def. end

Height: 6-3

Weight: 210

Speed: 4.5

Bench press: 300

1986 team record: 11-0. Lincoln is

the two-time defending Division III state champion.

On the field: playing both wide receiver and defensive end, Croel caught 19 passes for a 29-yard average and returned three kicks (kickoff, punt and free kick) for touchdowns. Played defensive end and running back as a junior. As a sophomore, he won the New England prep 100-meter championship with a time of 10.7, and is projected by track coach Pat McMahon to repeat this year after a hip pull forced him out of competition as a junior. Led Lincoln in total tackles and blocked three punts. Against rival Bosco High School (tied 0-0 in the third period), Croel blocked a quick kick on third down. Bosco recovered and punted again on fourth down. Croel blocked it with Lincoln getting the safety. On the ensuing free kick, Croel ran it back for a 78-yard TD.

Years started: two (two letters)

Other sports: track. He runs the 100, 200, long jump and triple jump. Croel has posted a 21.9 in the 200, long jumped 21'1" and



LEODIS FLOWERS

School: Central (Omaha)

Eagles

Position: running back

Height: 5-11

Weight: 190

Speed: 4.5

Bench press: 280

1986 team record: 7-2.

On the field: *Parade* All-American. Rushed for 1,765 yards as a junior and 1,203 as a senior despite missing more than three games with an ankle injury. He finished his career with 3,865 yards. Flowers has been rated the nation's No. 4 "speed" running back by recruiting guru Max Emfinger, and the 18th best player overall by the *Dallas Morning News*. He made a spectacular debut as a sophomore by rushing for 496 yards and seven touchdowns during Central's three-game playoff run to the Class A state championship.

Years started: 3 (three letters)

Hobbies: fishing

Other sports: basketball, track (sprints)

Academic interest: business/finance

Why Nebraska? "I like the offensive formation. I got a good feeling from the coaches — they impressed me. Plus, the academics are good. And last, but not least, it's close to home."

Other choices: OU, Iowa



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Eagle Coach William Reed says: "He's just a great running back, probably the best one I've ever seen. He can get the tough yards inside or break wide and go all the way. He's got the strength, speed and intelligence to be a great college running back."

Gillespie says: "We're very happy to have Leodis at Nebraska. There's not much more you can say that hasn't already been said. He should do quite well in college."

Born August 21, 1969. Son of Clarence and Vera Flowers.

CHRIS GARRETT

School: Snyder (Tx.) H.S.

Position: defensive end

Height: 6-3

Weight: 217

Speed: 4.7

Bench press: not available

On the field: Two-time All-West Texas and All-South Plains as a tight end and linebacker. He caught 15 passes as a senior and averaged eight tackles per game, intercepted two passes and recovered two fumbles.

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: basketball. Chris is a three-year letter winner in basketball and averaged 17 points and 13 rebounds per game this season.

Why Nebraska? "They win every year and have great facilities. It should be a good school for me to make a lot of improvement." Recruited by Milt Tenopir.

Snyder Coach Dennis Tomlin says: "He's got the frame to be a lot bigger. He's got tons of potential. Chris is a super blocker, too, both on the run and pass."

Gillespie says: "He's another player who moves extremely well for a guy his size. Very coordinated. Versatile. Could play either side of the ball. Good hands."

Born Nov. 17, 1968. Son of Emma Garrett.



TIM HERMAN

School: Lincoln (Neb.)

Knights

Position: linebacker

Height: 6-6

Weight: 240

Speed: 4.8

Bench press: not available

On the field: twice was named All-Class All-State and was the Knights' all-time leading tackler. Generally considered the top defensive player in Nebraska. He is the career tackle leader at LHS and finished his senior season with 185 total stops.

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: basketball. Herman is a two-year starter, averaging 14 points per game this season.

Why Nebraska? "I've always liked Nebraska because of their winning tradition and exciting football. They've got real good facilities, and, of course, my family and friends can see me play a lot." Recruited by John Melton.

Gillespie says: "Tim, of course, has great size, but he also has great agility and aggressiveness to go with it. We're certainly glad to get a player like Tim who received tremendous interest from other schools all across the country. He's a very tough kid. He'll be a good player."

Son of John and Betty Herman.

TIM JACKSON

School: Coffeyville (Ks.) Junior College

Position: safety

Height: 6-0

Weight: 195

Speed: 4.5

Bench press: 300. Jackson was voted "Lifter of the Year" by his teammates at CJC.

1986 team record: 9-2

On the field: All-conference and honorable mention All-American. CJC used essentially the same secondary scheme that Nebraska does which should make for a smooth transition. Jackson actually played against Nebraska as a freshman at Kansas State before transferring when Wildcat Coach Jim Dickey was fired during his sophomore year.

Years started: one (one letter). Jackson will be a junior in eligibility next fall.

Why Nebraska? "I really like their winning program, and the defensive secondary scheme is just perfect for me. It's going to be fun."

Other choices: Arkansas, Texas Tech, Texas A & M. Jackson was heavily recruited by most Southwest Conference schools. His hometown is Dallas.

CJC Coach Dick Foster says: "He's the best defensive back I've coached, and I've had some guys go on to play pro ball. He's a great student: somewhere in the 3.0 range. And he loves to lift weights."

Gillespie says: "The cartilage problem in his knee doesn't seem to bother him any more. Good size and smart."



MICKEY JOSEPH

School: Archbishop Shaw

(Merrero, La.) Eagles

Position: quarterback

Height: 5-11

Weight: 175

Speed: 4.5

Bench press: 260

1986 team record: 10-0

On the field: *USA Today*, *Parade* and Bally All-American. Unquestionably the top-rated option quarterback in America. He had seven touchdown runs of over 60 yards as a senior when he ran for 920 yards and passed for 1,087. Poise and leadership are other traits of Joseph, who led the Eagles to a 19-1 record in his final two seasons. Against John Erick HS he ran for 149 yards and two TDs while passing for 171 yards and another score.

Years started: three (three letters). Joseph started as a tailback his sophomore season.

Other sports: track. He has run a 10.5 in the 100 meters.

Hobbies: spending time with three-year-old brother Samuel

Why Nebraska? "The winning tradition, academics and social life." Recruited by Jack Pierce.

Other choices: OU, Tulane

Eagle Coach Hank Tierney says: "Mickey's just like Jamelle Holieway, only he has great speed and I think he can throw better. He has pure blinding speed. When he gets in the open field — goodbye. He backpeddles faster than most people run forward."

Gillespie says: "We're very happy to have him."

Born March 5, 1968. Son of Mickey and Linda Joseph.



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WAYNE KENEIPP

(pronounced ka-NEEP)

School: Leo (Chicago)

Lions

Position: offensive line

Height: 6-3

Weight: 240

Speed: 4.9

Bench press: 400

1986 team record: 5-4

Hobbies: power lifting

Academic interest: business

On the field: Named All-State as an offensive tackle and was selected to play in the Illinois Shrine game. Outdueled St. Rita's outstanding lineman Joe Allen, one of the top defensive prospects in Chicago this year.

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: track. As a junior, Keneipp threw the shot in excess of 57 feet, a Catholic League record and best in the state that season.

Why Nebraska? "I've always wanted to go there. It just appealed to me. After meeting with the coaches, I was very impressed. Nebraska's record speaks for itself." Recruited by Charlie McBride.

Other choices: Illinois, Purdue

Lion Coach Bob Foster says: "Wayne's got great explosive force. He's pretty familiar with Nebraska's offense because we ran the I-formation. He really enjoys working with weights and has super work habits."

Gillespie says: "Very strong and moves very well. He has the talent to be either an offensive guard or even a middle guard."

Born July 12, 1969. Son of Wayne and Peggy Keneipp.



DARYL LEISE

(pronounced LY-zee)

School: Creighton Prep

(Omaha) Junior Jays

Position: def. end/linebacker

Height: 6-3

Weight: 215

Speed: 4.9

Bench press: 330

1986 team record: 11-1

Years started: two (three letters)

Other sports: freshman basketball

On the field: made all-state as a senior defensive end. He was a two-year starter and recorded 76 tackles in 1986 and recovered one fumble for a touchdown. Very disciplined and is a good leader on and off the field.

Special interests: church activities

Academic interest: financial management

Why Nebraska? "The coaches all seemed to have fun, among themselves and with the players. Also, going to Nebraska gives me a chance to move away from home, but not move too far." Recruited by Dan Young

Other choices: Notre Dame

Junior Jay Coach Tom Jaworski says: "Daryl's only been playing football for three years and has the potential to really improve in college. You could say he's a late bloomer, but he's also a very talented athlete."

Gillespie says: "Very intelligent. He's a good athlete and steady player. The key is to get him in the right position. I think he was a little overshadowed by his teammates at Creighton Prep, but he's a good one anyway you look at it."

Born May 15, 1969. Son of Roger and LaVonne Leise.



TAHAUN LEWIS

(pronounced ta-HAHN)

School: Doherty (Colorado

Springs) Spartans

Position: defensive back

Height: 5-11

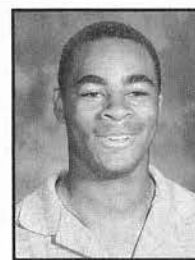
Weight: 175

Speed: 4.5

Bench press: 245

1986 team record: 10-2. Doherty

reached the state quarter-finals.



On the field: A two-year starter for DHS with great speed at the strong safety position. Almost single-handedly stopped Ft. Collins High School with three interceptions. Finished year with seven interceptions and over 60 tackles. Visited UNL campus under horrid weather conditions, but returned home with a Nebraska sweatshirt, purchased with his own money, something he didn't do at other schools, according to his dad.

Years started: two (two letters)

Other sports: track (sprints)

Hobbies: snow skiing, weight lifting, art, computers

Why Nebraska? "Their great winning tradition."

Other choices: OU, Kansas, Colorado

Spartan Coach Harold Hamilton says: "He's an exceptional hitter and has great reaction time to the ball — he's always around the ball. We play in mostly a running league and he supports well, although he also plays well against the pass."

Gillespie says: "Very aggressive and fills very well on the run. Fine speed, although he could probably get faster, which is something we always like our defensive backs to do."

Son of Bob Page, foster parent. Born Sept. 29, 1968.

DAN LOHMEIER

(pronounced LO-myer)

School: Creighton Prep

(Omaha) Junior Jays

Position: tight end

Height: 6-5

Weight: 222

Speed: 4.8

Bench press: 310

1986 team record: 11-1

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: baseball, basketball

On the field: Bally All-American and twice named All-Class All-State. Caught 18 passes for 289 yards as a senior and four TDs. Also played some defensive tackle, logging 51 total tackles. One of three Creighton Prep players to sign with Nebraska, joining Daryle Leise and George Achola.

Academic interest: business law

Why Nebraska: "Definitely, it was their overall program — the coaches, facility and tradition. Plus, a lot of my friends from school plan to go there. Also, I think there's a great chance we can win a national championship pretty soon." Recruited by Dan Young.

Junior Jay Coach Tom Jaworski says: "He's a fantastic blocker, and I mean fan-tastic. He doesn't have the great receiving stats because we don't throw the ball that much. But he has great hands that will make him a great college player. He's got a great attitude."

Gillespie says: "Real good size and catches the ball well. Very good work ethic. He has all the tools to be a great player. He was intensely recruited and cancelled trips to Notre Dame and Michigan to accept our offer. An intelligent, tough kid."

Born Sept. 14, 1968. Son of Don and Pat Lohmeire.



KEITHEN McCANT

School: Grand Prairie

(Tx.) Gophers

Position: quarterback

Height: 6-2

Weight: 180

Speed: 4.7

Bench press: not available

1986 team record: 7-3

Years started: two (three letters)

Other sports: none

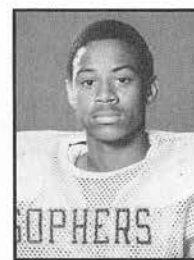
On the field: rated by recruiting expert Max Emfinger as the No. 2 option quarterback in Texas. District Offensive Player of the Year and two-time All-District first teamer. Passed for more than 1,500 yards and 18 TDs as a senior. Against district champ Duncanville, McCant passed for over 200 yards and also had a 64-yard TD run. Remarkable consistency.

Hobbies: swimming, being with friends

Academic interest: business or coaching

School activities: Spanish Club, FCA

Why Nebraska? "The great tradition. Plus, the players really help



MEET THE NEWEST HUSKERS

you fit in. I really enjoyed talking with Morgan Gregory, Broderick Thomas and Steve Taylor. I've always been close to my coaches and I really liked Coach Osborne."

Gopher Coach Ken Murray says: "His rushing stats aren't real gaudy because we didn't use him as a runner that much, but he certainly has good speed and great decision-making ability. He's a fine young man, strong on character, with great work habits. He concentrates hard and has a gleam in his eye — he's always enthused about what's going on the field." Signed with Jack Pierce.

Gillespie says: "Good size and speed with a good combination of running and throwing skills. He'll be a good player for us. Has a lot of composure and when he did get an opening, he turned up field well."

Born March 8, 1969 Son of Melba Thompson.

JOE SIMS

School: Lincoln (Sudbury, Mass.) Warriors

Position: linebacker/def. tackle

Height: 6-4

Weight: 230

Speed: 4.8

Bench press: not available

1986 team record: 11-0

Hobbies: working on cars, skiing

Academic interest: computers

On the field: Both all-state and all-east while playing split end. Teamed with another Husker signee, Mike Croel, to help the Warriors to consecutive state championships. Also played defensive tackle. Against Concord High School, Sims pressured highly touted quarterback Willie Hicks all night and finished with three QB sacks and a trio of "pressures." LHS eventually won, 9-7.

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: basketball. He was all-league last year and is leading the Warriors in scoring this season.

Why Nebraska? "I like the people and they all seemed very nice. Plus, football is a priority at Nebraska, which isn't the case in New England. I also like the laid back atmosphere. I'm ready to get out of the hustle and bustle of Boston." Recruited by Frank Solich.

Other choices: Notre Dame, Syracuse, Boston College

Warrior Coach Tom Lopez says: "He's a super athlete who dominated both sides of the ball. As a receiver, he forced other teams to defend him. He's very agile and quick."

Gillespie says: "Good size and movement. Very versatile and can play on either side of the ball. We'd like to see him improve his speed a little, but that's to be expected."

Born March 1, 1969. Son of John and Shirley Sims.

WILLIAM THOMAS

School: James Madison

(Houston) Marlins

Position: defensive back

Height: 6-2

Weight: 170

Speed: 4.6

Bench press: not available

1986 team record: 7-6. Madison

regrouped after a 5-5 regular season to reach the region playoffs.

On the field: made All-District at defensive back after starting the season at quarterback. A thumb injury forced the change. In the first MHS district game of 1987, Thomas played at quarterback and took his first snap 69 yards for a touchdown. Brother of current Husker defensive end Broderick Thomas.

Years started: two (two letters)

Other sports: track. 100, 100, 400 relay and long jump, in which he was last season's city champ with a leap of 23'6".

Hobbies: dancing, jogging

Academic interest: criminal justice

Why Nebraska? "It's a beautiful place to live and better yourself. My brother can help make adjustments pretty easy, and, of course, I expect we'll be winning the national championship pretty soon." Recruited by Tony Samuel.



Other choices: Colorado, Tulsa, UTEP

Marlin Coach Bill Matysiak says: "He's a tough kid and really likes to strike a blow. He was a quarterback throughout his junior year and through four games this year."

Gillespie says: "Very quick and real aggressive. He did a pretty good job on the offensive side of the ball, too, as a quarterback. He has the tools to play safety or corner."

Born June 10, 1969. Son of Will and Linda Thomas.

NATE TURNER

School: Mt. Carmel

(Chicago) Caravan

Position: wingback/wide receiver

Height: 6-2

Weight: 205

Speed: 4.5

Bench press: not available

1986 team record: 13-1. The Caravan went undefeated until the state championship finals.

On the field: *USA Today*, *Bally* and *Parade* All-American, making him one of the top receivers in the country. As a senior he caught 35 passes for 544 yards and seven TDs, rushed 38 times for 291 yards for three scores and had 23 kick returns for 522 yards and two TDs.

Years started: two (two letters)

Other sports: track. Turner runs the low hurdles and, as a sophomore, posted one of the top four times in Illinois high school competition.

Hobbies: working on cars

Academic interest: undecided

Why Nebraska? "I've wanted to go to Nebraska since I was a kid. I've always just wanted to wear a big 'N' on my helmet." Recruited by Charlie McBride.

Other choices: Georgia, Illinois, Michigan State

Caravan Coach Frank Lenti says: "Guys who run a 4.5 are usually about 170 pounds. Nate has great speed and size. He's a hard worker and great team player. At no time did he ever think about his stats. He'd just as soon go do something else."

Gillespie says: "Great athlete. He didn't really catch as many passes this year as the year before because of all the extra coverage he received. Super player."

Born May 28, 1969. Son of Nathan and Ellen Turner.



ERIK WIEGERT

(pronounced WE-gert)

School: Bergan (Fremont,

Neb.) Knights

Position: defensive end

Height: 6-4

Weight: 242

Speed: 5.0

Bench press: 270

1986 team record: 10-2. Knights reached the state semi-finals.

On the field: All-state as a senior, all-conference for two years, All-Area and Outstanding Lineman.

Years started: three (three letters)

Other sports: basketball, track

Hobbies: hunting, golf

Academic interest: business

Why Nebraska? "For a lineman, it's the best college in the country. Plus, they've got great facility and great people. It doesn't hurt that it's so close."

Other choices: Iowa, OU, Wyoming, Iowa State

Knight Coach Joe Vojtech says: "The first thing you notice is his great size. And it's definitely a plus that he's only 17 and is sure to grow even more. He's only been lifting weight this past season, so you know he's going to get stronger. He could easily carry 270 pounds. He's an outstanding student, too."

Gillespie says: "Moves extremely well, very aggressive and good strength. Played as a down-end mostly, so he has the size and skill to play on either side of the ball."

Born May 6, 1969. Son of Hedy Warden and Ward Webber.



Looking back on the recruiting season, the hectic and exciting finish that saw All-Americans Mickey Joseph (quarterback) and Leodis Flowers (running back) sign with Nebraska couldn't have happened without daily, almost tedious, groundwork. During the seven days prior to February 11, life at the Nebraska football office was relatively calm, but with each passing day, the pieces began to fall together and a dramatic finish was taking shape.

WEDNESDAY, February 4 — It starts as a dreary northern plains day: a high near 40 degrees with grey clouds. The sun tries to peek out at noon but quickly disappears.

It's slow in Huskerland and most of the assistant coaches are in the field. George Darlington is in California, Charlie McBride is recruiting in Chicago, Frank Solich scours New Jersey, Milt Tenopir is in scenic west Texas, Dan Young is in Omaha, Tony Samuel is in transit from Detroit to Louisiana and off-campus Recruiting Coordinator Jack Pierce is in New Orleans, land of the much-sought-after Joseph.

Osborne leaves at noon to join Darlington in California.

Only cagey veteran John Melton remains in Lincoln, and he plans to leave for Detroit on Thursday.

Secretaries Joni Hentzen and Mary Lin Wininger have plenty of time for house cleaning chores. On-campus Recruiting Coordinator Dave Gillespie answers a few phone calls from alumni, friends, former players and the media as interest is high about this year's recruiting, and for good reason. With only a week to go before signing day, the Huskers have 17 verbal commitments.

Gillespie looks forward to getting home at a decent hour as the pace has slowed in the past two weeks.

It begins, however, to pick up again. Later in the afternoon, Nebraska gets word that three "great" players have verbally committed: running back George Achola from Omaha, defensive tackle Joe Sims of Sudbury, Massachusetts, and defensive end Reggie Cooper of Slidell, Louisiana.

THURSDAY, February 5 — It's 35 degrees with an inch of snow from an overnight flurry. As temperatures rise, the Nebraska campus turns sloppy under the students' foot traffic on this partly cloudy day.

Gillespie's assistant Pat Sudman is already preparing next year's prospect cards which will be mailed to more than 1,000 high school coaches the week after signing day.

"It's going to be a zoo," she frets. When the replies come in, position

coaches will review each player's card and recommend which ones to pursue further with in-depth questionnaires.

As the last on-campus visit weekend nears, coaches are returning home for final preparations. Solich, McBride, Tenopir and Young will be back for the rest of the week. Still in California are Darlington and Osborne. Melton arrives in Detroit today and is joined by Samuel who returned to join him. Pierce shakes it up in Houston.

Former Husker quarterback Turner Gill is making phone calls to recruits and Gillespie tries to find San Francisco 49er halfback and UNL alum

sideration by heart.

Bad news arrives on Thursday. Gillespie is disappointed but not surprised by news that Omaha Creighton Prep running back Ricky Davis has agreed to attend Stanford. Davis had been hinting for several weeks that he would leave the state.

Otherwise, there are no commitments today. A rumor reaches the office that defensive tackle Bob Henry (Cudahy, Wisc.) will commit to Nebraska. No confirmation is received and by signing day the report will be proven false.

The entire UNL campus is buzzing about all-world running back Emmitt Smith (Pensacola, Fla.) who has shown considerable interest in Nebraska just within the past few weeks. Even during the Sugar Bowl, Gillespie indicated Smith was a great back, but that it might be counterproductive to send a coach out of his way to Florida to pursue a player with limited interest in the Huskers. That's exactly what happened: Smith did show more interest. Upon notification of Smith's new level of attention, Pierce went to Florida in late January. Osborne followed up shortly thereafter and soon Smith was visiting Lincoln. Nebraska is suddenly in the middle of the hunt.

Running back is a key position for Nebraska in '87.

Osborne calls from California to check with Gillespie about who needs to be pushed and who needs attention.

Gillespie takes his work home with him and spends most of Thursday night talking with athletes over the telephone.

Young stays late, waiting for a call from Osborne from the west coast. Their topic of conversation will be Omaha and another heralded running back — Leodis Flowers.

FRIDAY, February 6 — The weather is definitely cooperating as Nebraska will host its last on-campus visits this weekend. Bright, sunny skies put the high temperature near 48 degrees: ideal recruiting weather.

All the assistant coaches except Darlington, who will arrive in the afternoon, are back in the office. Osborne lands at the airport at 1:00 p.m. and Gillespie leaves to pick him up.

Pierce is also caught up in the excitement of the strong verbal commitments and prospects for signing some great players at the last minute. However, his trips this week have hardly been fun; exciting, yes, but not fun. At the Houston airport, the airliner he is riding blows out a tire on the runway to delay that flight. Trying to land in Dallas, Pierce must endure three separate landing attempts as the pilot struggles to get home safely. Finally

Recruiting Diary

Seven days in February are tense, dramatic and productive.

**By Mark Owens
and Steve Thomas**

Roger Craig to see if he will do the same.

Gillespie and graduate assistant Bill Kinney watch film of walk-on prospects. They casually discuss how the excitement and anxiety is building as the number of star players interested in Nebraska is still high while the scholarships available are rapidly dwindling. Some tough decisions will have to be made.

The wall-length U.S. map in the conference room is clear now; all the color-coded stick pins which showed strategic locations are removed. Used extensively when coaches were dealing with large numbers of prospects, the system is not needed now that coaches know the athletes under con-

on solid ground, Pierce spends almost his entire day on the phone with high school players and their coaches. Nebraska's football version of a traveling salesman, Pierce somehow found time today to sneak out for a hair cut.

Kinney and graduate assistants Doug King and Shane Thorell spend much of the day evaluating walkons.

Per Osborne's wishes, Nebraska annually sets aside four or five scholarships for players who have progressed through the walkon program and deserve a shot at the big time. Preparations are underway today for walkon visits which will be hosted the weekend after signing day. Walking on at Nebraska is very much like recruiting and athletes must be evaluated in advance before they can enter the program. Walking on at Nebraska is prized by many athletes and competition, although on a smaller scale than scholarship action, is still keen.

Osborne schedules a staff-wide strategy meeting for Saturday morning in the football office. Such meet-

ings are generally rare when recruiting moves into high gear. Osborne's philosophy is to spend time in person with the athletes and to handle strategy over the telephone.

By the end of the day, Pat begins typing some very valuable documents: the letters-of-intent. It's a standardized form used by all NCAA schools in all sports. She fills in the blanks and has them ready to be signed by the player, his guardian and Athletic Director Bob Devaney. Pat types one document for each player who has made a verbal commitment, plus she adds a letter from Coach Osborne.

With two or possibly three scholarships available, Pat types another stack of letters-of-intent. It includes 10 names. They are the "hopefuls," the players who Nebraska would like to have, of which only a few will get offers. The majority of the players will never get a copy. Days after signing is over, the "hopeful" file will be shredded.

THE WEEKEND, February 7-8 —

Beautiful weather for two days is the highlight of this weekend as only three scholarship prospects and eight walkon candidates tour the Husker facility. Three players agree to play for Nebraska, paying their own way.

The strategy session proves successful and plans are made for coaches to disperse throughout the country starting Sunday night. By Monday morning, all the coaches will be gone.

Some tough decisions are made, and the wheels are set in motion for coaches to call players on Monday and relay some bad news — there is no longer a scholarship at Nebraska for them.

MONDAY, February 9 — The sun shines brightly and the temperature hits 43 degrees as the hectic part of recruiting begins. One verbal commitment from the right player will send the coaches in different directions.

Darlington and McBride are still in Lincoln, but Tenopir has ventured to West Texas again, Pierce is in Houston, Samuel is in Detroit and the trio

By Mark Owens

In Losing Gayle Sayers Did Nebraska

Nebraska fans will always remember the 1971 "Game of the Century," Johnny Rodgers winning the Heisman and the Triplets of '83 as highlights of Husker football success. Never forget, though, the man who made it possible was Gayle Sayers.

As an all-world halfback at Omaha Central High School in 1960, Sayers shook Nebraska football, not so much by what he did but by what he didn't do. He didn't sign with Nebraska. He was the ultimate in-state recruit that got away.

Kansas was armed with a 12-7-1 record during that time, an unofficial conference title in 1960 and a determined head coach by the name of Jack Mitchell. He knew that Sayers was born in Wichita and even lived in Kansas for seven years. But Mitchell couldn't take credit for his ace-up-the-sleeve.

"Kansas had two black fraternities, a couple of black sororities and just a more attractive social situation for minority students," said Sayers. "Nebraska had very few minority students

on campus at the time.

"It was important to me that I felt comfortable on campus and felt accepted," said Sayers. He wanted to slash through tacklers, not racial barriers.

Determined, hard-working and personable, Sayers loomed as a giant football talent. As the dominant player for CHS coach Frank Smagacz, Sayers received scholarship offers from over 100 schools. Everybody wanted him, including Jennings and the Huskers. The lucky winner in this recruiting race could triumphantly boast, "He's got it all — he's a superstar human being with superstar talent."

Jennings traveled to Omaha, where he and Mitchell waged a war of words, to persuade Sayers to come to Nebraska.

Mitchell had his zingers. KU scored more points in 1960 than Nebraska had in 1959 and '60 combined; the Huskers hadn't scored a TD against Kansas since 1958; KU defeated the Huskers 29-7 on regional NBC-TV in 1958; Jennings hadn't posted a win-

ning season yet; and, most importantly, Jennings' Husker team was shut out 11 times in four years. "Gayle, that ain't no offensive powerhouse in Lincoln."

Still, the lure of playing in his home state with a chance to revitalize the Huskers appealed to Sayers. Jennings recruited to the point of exhaustion.

What did Sayers think of Jennings?

"He was," Sayers said diplomatically, "a very, very nice man."

Jennings' "football mind" impressed Sayers (and many students of the game), but as veteran Nebraska sports writers would say, "Jennings would make a fantastic assistant coach."

Nebraska and Jennings loomed as strong competitors in the recruiting race throughout the summer of 1961. But, by mid-summer, Sayers had divulged the winner; he looked toward Kansas, and he was gone.

Jennings' regime at Nebraska wheezed and his Husker football program fluttered like an untied balloon on its last puffs of air. *Phhtttttt.....*

of Solich, Young and Osborne spend Monday in Omaha. Later that day, Solich travels to Massachusetts.

Darlington dictates letters to Joni for players that will not be given scholarships. After lunch, an unconfirmed report comes in that a superstar in Texas wants to verbally commit to Nebraska. Darlington scurries to the airport.

Indications are that Nebraska is still in contention for Smith, although the running back is also seriously considering Auburn and Florida.

Pat finishes typing the last letters-of-intent and distributes them to the coaches who are still on campus.

The day passes without any more verbal commitments, and it becomes clear that Nebraska will pass over players they would normally want to sign in other years.

For the last, harried recruiting push, Joni telephones hotels across the country to make reservations for the private pilots that Nebraska must sometimes use to reach inconveniently located athletes.

Dave answers a steady stream of telephone inquiries from the Lincoln and Omaha media, as well as the Associated Press.

A furor has erupted in the media with Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer as the central character. While visiting Flowers in Omaha over the weekend, Switzer made comments to the media about Flowers, specifically that he would contribute very soon at Oklahoma and probably be on the second-team as a freshman.

NCAA rules state such comments are inappropriate, and the media trumpets that Oklahoma may be in trouble with the NCAA. Nebraska coaches who are still in the office refer to the media excitement as a circus.

Nebraska's position is to give Flowers a rest, to let him make a decision on his own. They have stated their case as to why he should play for Nebraska. Iowa and Oklahoma appear to be very much in contention.

That night, Flowers says he is sick of the pressure, that it seems to be forcing him away from Nebraska. A

kook calls the Flowers' home (older brother Clarence answers the phone) with a death threat. At one point, the independent-minded halfback thought Nebraska was the place he wanted to go. As of Monday, February 9, he wasn't so sure anymore.

TUESDAY, February 10 — It's dead. The weather continues to be unseasonably nice, but the Nebraska football office is at a standstill.

All the coaches are on the road and where they should be. Osborne and Pierce are in New Orleans again, trying to keep tabs on Joseph. Solich is in Boston, Samuel is on his way to Houston, Tenopir is in west Texas, McBride is stationed in Chicago, Darlington is in Dallas and Melton makes an out-of-the-ordinary stop in Las Vegas, strictly for recruiting purposes. Young stays to scour Nebraska.

Gillespie doesn't expect any major calls today. Indications are that Smith will announce something today, and television reporters in Florida think the speedy halfback will cast his lot

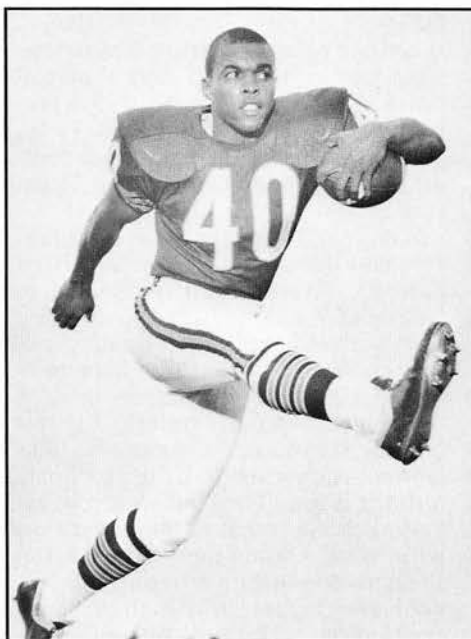
Gain A Couple of National Championships?

Big Red would never be the same following the recruiting loss of Sayers. Anticipation, tension and even excitement engulfed both Lawrence and Lincoln.

When Sayers finally reached the varsity, he reshaped Big Eight football immediately: he ran for 1,125 yards as a sophomore (averaging 7.1 yards per carry). In only his fifth game as a varsity player (against Oklahoma State), Sayers ran 22 times for 283 yards; he made All-Big Eight three times and All-American twice. The Jayhawks never had a losing season during his career.

Nebraska finished 3-6-1 in 1962 and Jennings ran out of chances. He never had time to showcase halfback Kent McCloughan, who actually beat Sayers as Nebraska's high school Player of the Year in 1960. Despite the talent on campus, Jennings never produced a winner. After the '62 season, a feisty Bob Devaney, beaming with confidence, replaced Jennings. The Devaney era had begun.

Under Devaney, the Huskers won



Gayle Sayers

38 games, went to three bowls and never lost to Kansas during Sayers' varsity career.

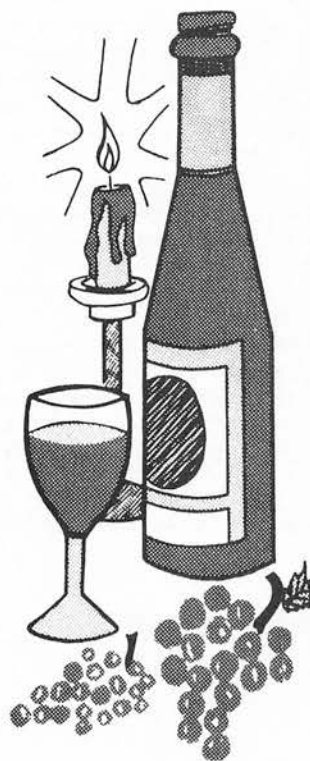
But, what if Sayers had signed with Nebraska?

If the best running back in America had enough confidence to invest four years with Jennings, wouldn't Husker supporters have felt the same? If he had set freshmen football records at Nebraska, like he did at Kansas in 1961, Sayers by himself would have generated excitement and anticipation about the next season. One more season. Think of the victories; surely the Huskers could have ridden their star player to 6-4 or 7-3 seasons.

And think of Devaney. With Sayers playing three years at Nebraska under Jennings, Devaney would have stayed at Wyoming, probably taken another head coaching job and never hired Tom Osborne.

What would have happened to the "Game of the Century", the Heisman and the Triplets if Sayers had come to Nebraska and Devaney, instead, had been the prize that got away? ♦

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with the Gators.

Smith already has a close friend attending Florida and his high school team's quarterback has verbally committed. However, he says Nebraska is still in the hunt.

Some disappointing news comes in. Darlington discovers that the hot prospect from Texas who seemed so interested Monday is no longer interested in Nebraska.

Gillespie receives fewer phone calls but makes plenty. He reviews strategy and rules with coaches over the phone. He reminds them that players can only be signed after 8 a.m. on Wednesday and that it can be done either at the school or off campus. Tired from the two-month recruiting ordeal, Gillespie hustles to make sure everyone is where they're supposed to be.

More bad news. California running back Leonard Russell announces he will attend Arizona State. He was strongly considering UNL as well as Southern California. Nebraska will have to wait until September 26 before they can get their hands on him. That's when the Huskers and ASU will play in Tempe.

Also, George Hemingway, another burly California runner, announces he will sign with Colorado. The Buffs played several freshmen against Nebraska in 1986, and the Huskers may see their once-hot prospect again this fall.

Anthony Ray (Wharton, Texas running back), however, says that Nebraska is still very much in the picture, along with Baylor and Texas A&M, which has already gotten commitments from an army of top Texas runners.

Santana Dotson, a massive defensive end out of Houston (Yates High School), says he's still interested in Nebraska.

Overall, Nebraska's recruiting approach is very consistent and low-key, not hard-sell at all. But there is one player who is getting, by Nebraska standards, a hard-sell. Oklahoma is shocked to hear that quarterback Kenny Ford will disavow his verbal commitment to them and sign with rival Oklahoma State. If the Sooners do not sign Joseph, they will not have a signal caller in their '87 recruiting class. The hard-sell on Joseph just got harder.

The highly touted quarterback has made it clear he will not sign on Wednesday with anybody. OU and Nebraska will have to wait.

WEDNESDAY, February 11 — Another sunny, beautiful day will perhaps be a good omen.

The intercom system is busy all day.

"Dave Gillespie, line 53 for Dan Young," Joni announces throughout the office. "Dave, line 53 for Dan Young."

"Did you sign those three guys at Prep?" Gillespie asks. "All right. Let me tell him. Coach Osborne's on the other phone. Bye."

It's like that all day.

By mid-morning, the signee list is modest. Solich has inked Mike Croel and Joe Sims in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Reggie Cooper out of Louisiana, Chris Garrett from Texas and Tim Herman of Lincoln are in. Pat relays the signees to Assistant Sports Information Director Tom Simons. A news conference is slated for 4 p.m.

Gillespie is constantly on the phone, mostly listening.

Word is out that Lucious Selmon of OU is in New Orleans and that the Joseph family telephone line is being tied up by Sooners coaches. Nebraska can't get in.

Osborne calls in from St. Louis and Gillespie relays that he has one visit left with Joseph, but (per NCAA rules) he as head coach cannot personally sign him. Plans are changed. Pat coordinates with Mary Lyn Wininger, Osborne's personal secretary, to get him a flight from St. Louis to New Orleans, preferably commercial.

It's set. The flight (TWA 601) leaves at 11:20 a.m., and Osborne has less than an hour to board. Having planned to return to Lincoln this afternoon for the news conference, Osborne instead will join Pierce in Bayou country. The news conference is in jeopardy.

On another call, Gillespie visits with one of Nate Turner's high school coaches in Chicago. "Great, great, great," he says. The *Parade* All-American receiver is set to be a Husker.

Tenopir phones in, wanting to know the status of Joseph and Flowers. No news yet.

Word arrives, however, that Smith has signed with Florida and Dotson will become a Baylor Bear.

The intercom haunts Gillespie.

"Dave, Tony Samuel on 56."

"Dave, Jack Pierce on 52. You have three minutes."

"Dave, Frank Solich on 53."

Despite the expected success, it is a serious day and Gillespie rarely leaves his desk, rarely smiles. Pat continues putting address labels on the remaining prospect cards with the help of staff photographer Dave Finn.

By 2 p.m., Jeff Chaney, Brian Brown, William Thomas and Keith McCant are confirmed as signed. Shortly after that, word comes in that Wayne Keneipp is a Husker. Pat relays the news to sports information.

Finally, Gillespie has a refreshing break. Lawrence Cooley, who played for Nebraska in the late 1970s and is now an assistant at Ball State, saunters into the recruiting office. Pat and Finn smile and laugh. Cooley is after some players in Beatrice and just thought he would drop by.

He and Finn slip around the partitioned office to chat with Gillespie about old times.

"You're lookin' good Dave," Cooley smilingly says of Gillespie's still-athletic stature. "Running?"

"Oh yeah, I'm running."

"And nerves," Finn adds, and the threesome breaks into a hearty laugh.

Cooley looks down at his stout figure and responds, "I don't have that problem with nerves, Dave."

Gillespie laughs, "No, Lawrence, you look pretty contented."

"Dave Gillespie, line 53 for Dan Young. Dave Gillespie, line 53 for Dan Young." The brief respite is over.

The sports information staff is pressing for a solution to the news conference problem. Will it be held? Who will host it? Gillespie agrees to speak.

With less than an hour before showtime, Gillespie decides to do some information gathering. He dials long distance.

"Hello, sports department please."

He waits to be connected.

"Yes, could you tell me if Oklahoma has signed any quarterbacks today?"

He winks to Pat while waiting for his answer.

"They haven't? That's fine. Thank you."

Gillespie goes about his business, then turns to explain, "The *Norman Transcript*. Fans call those newspapers all the time."

The 4 p.m. news conference finally arrives and Gillespie enters the "N" Lounge on the first floor where he is greeted by over 30 sports reporters. The television lights are bright and tension is high. The sports information office has provided dozens of photocopied releases on the signees. The count, however, is only 16. Still unaccounted for are linemen Erik Wiegert and Pat Englebert, plus two players from Doherty (Colorado Springs) High School: defensive back Tahaun Lewis and All-American lineman Brian Boerboom. All had previously made verbal commitments to UNL.

There were no easy questions.

"What is the status of Mickey Joseph and Leodis Flowers?"

"They're still unsigned and we're still very interested in them."

"How would you rate this year's class?"

"We really won't know that for

another four or five years."

"Where is Coach Osborne?"

"He's out of town and not available."

"Where exactly is Coach Osborne?"

"I'd rather not say."

Gillespie expresses satisfaction that this year's class appears to be strong academically and there shouldn't be any Proposition 48 casualties. The character and athletic ability of all the signees is sound, he explains. The media wants to know about Flowers and Joseph. Gillespie tactfully declines to comment.

Signing day comes to a slow end. Young sits in Gillespie's office and they recap the day's events. Later that night, at the Nebraska-Iowa State basketball game, Gillespie makes the rounds and patiently answers more questions, adding that the final four verbal commitments have been signed. Joseph, Flowers and Ray have not.

*"It's gonna be fun.
What did Switzer say?
He did? Did he really
say that? You know
we're going to win the
national
championship, don't
you?" — Broderick
Thomas.*

THURSDAY, February 12 — Despite having signed every verbally committed player on Wednesday, the atmosphere in the football offices is still tense. Most of the assistant coaches are back in, mostly looking at film, but Osborne and Pierce remain in Louisiana.

Word is out that Joseph will hold a 1:30 p.m. news conference to announce his choice.

It's getting late and 1:30 passes without a word. At 2 p.m., still no word. Stories and speculating about Joseph continue. Devaney is back in the office after being out of town for a week. He walks through the halls, touching base, looking snazzy with his brightly colored slacks and open-neck sport shirt.

At 2:30 p.m., the coaches have gone to the field house to observe conditioning drills. Suddenly, the second floor of the football office snaps to attention as Joni speaks on the inter-

com, "Dave Gillespie, dial 53 for Mickey Joseph. Dave Gillespie, dial 53 for Mickey Joseph."

One battle is over.

Later that afternoon, Broderick Thomas sits in the football reception office waiting for a doctor's appointment. His flu is killing him. Joni makes arrangements with Marrero High School to get Joseph on the phone. While she's busy, Thomas mans the other phone. "Football office, can I help you? Terry Pettit? I think he's the volleyball coach. Just a minute, I'll transfer you." Thomas does an admirable job of answering the phone.

The Converse shoe salesman comes in and leaves some spectacularly colorful brochures for Osborne, whom he glibly refers to as "T.O." Gillespie walks in, smiling. Getting a cup of coffee, he asks the salesman what kind of shoes he's wearing. He hitches up one pant leg, sticks out his foot and goes into his routine about a waffle sole. Gillespie is pleasant and attentive. It's easy to be pleasant and attentive today.

Joseph is on the line.

"You did it!" Thomas says.

"It's gonna be fun. What did Switzer say? He did? Did he really say that? You know we're going to win the national championship, don't you?"

Thomas talks enthusiastically for 10 minutes.

"All right, man, we'll talk to you later."

He turns to Joni, smiles and says, "I knew he was going to sign with us all along."

In Oklahoma, WWLS radio sportscaster Al Eschbach interviews OU Recruiting Coordinator Scott Hill, who is in California.

"What do you think of the Joseph situation, Scotty?"

"I feel pretty good about him."

"Scotty, did you know Joseph signed with Nebraska?"

"Hmmm," Hill pauses. "Well I'll be damned."

MONDAY, February 16 — Ray still has a chance to become a Husker. So does Flowers. Rumors spread that Flowers has called a news conference for today. But it never materializes. Instead, Osborne goes to Central High School in Omaha to see Flowers. That afternoon, at his home, Flowers unceremoniously signs with Nebraska. Ray had his chance and passed it up. There would be no more scholarship offers coming out of Nebraska.

After a week of wonderful weather, it finally turned grey and cloudy with icy temperatures and an early morning threat of snow. It was a great day. ♦

Cornhuskers... Confidentially

BODY SNATCHERS REVISITED

Little doubt remains that Nebraska clobbered Oklahoma in two exciting and emotional recruiting battles: the war of '87, Joseph and Flowers. The clashes were tests of inner resolve. Tom Osborne vowed to "win Omaha" and did. Both schools jostled feverishly for Joseph whose press clippings indicate he may be a one-a-decade quarterback. Look what was at stake.

In early February, Oklahoma's Barry Switzer hinted publicly that his '87 recruiting class was on the verge of ensuring him a dynasty. Instead, Nebraska's two last-minute



Tom Osborne

raids boosted the Huskers ahead of Oklahoma in this year's recruiting race, according to recruitologist Max Emfinger of Houston.

GROUND BOUND

Osborne found the flying a little inconvenient this recruiting season as he has not been able to pilot himself since his heart surgery three years ago. The Federal Aviation Administration states that anyone having undergone heart surgery is classified as a heart attack victim and their pilot's license is suspended for health reasons.

Osborne has been slowly but surely building up flight hours to regain his

solo touch.

Wherever possible, Osborne took commercial flights during this especially busy recruiting season. When possible, private flights were arranged.

NIFTY FIFTY

Nancy Osborne surprised her husband Friday, setting up a "lunch" meeting for Coach Osborne, but then she reversed field and scored with an unexpected birthday party in the "N" Lounge on the first floor of the south stadium football complex. Coach Osborne turned 50 on February 23.

The surprise party had originally been scheduled for Monday the 23rd, but Osborne made plans for all assistant coaches to hit the road recruiting that day. Mary Lyn Wininger, Osborne's personal secretary, read that end run correctly and notified Mrs. Osborne for a quick change of plans.

The event was hosted at noon with assistant coaches, their wives and others from the football office attending the catered party. Later that afternoon, the second-floor football complex was decorated with black balloons and cake was served for the rest of the athletic department.

RE-VITALE-IZED

Basketball broadcaster Dick Vitale thinks highly of Big Eight hoop action in general and Danny Nee in particular.

"The Big Eight," Vitale confidently said earlier this season, "is no longer a football conference. I rate the Big Eight right behind my Big Four: the ACC, Big East, SEC and Big 10."

Vitale, who skyrockets across the country doing color commentary for ESPN, feels the Big Eight is better than the Metro Conference (featuring basketball giants Louisville and Memphis State) and

"they're certainly ahead of the Pac-10."

Vitale was impressed that the league has secured some scrappy new coaches and recruited "top-notch players, not just the back-ups like it used to be."

"And Danny Nee — I just love him. He's a tremendous coach and Nebraska did a great job by getting him. Of course, I'm a little prejudiced to guys from New York like me."

Vitale also raved about Kansas State and new coach Lon Kruger: "They are the surprise team in America. They must get more national attention."

Then Vitale put his money where his mouth is and predicted that the Big Eight could again sprinkle the NCAA tournament with five teams, just like '86.

"I see no reason why not," he said, then added emphatically, "absolutely!"

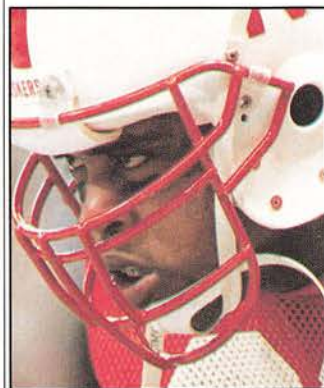
After his mid-season prediction, however, Vitale appeared slightly mistaken as Kansas and Oklahoma dominated the league. But then Nebraska whipped Iowa State and K-State within a week, Missouri stunned the Jayhawks and it looked like the Big Eight was setting up a strong, balanced finish. Dick Vitale may yet be proven right.

RESPECTED HUSKERS

Having followed high school recruiting for more than six years, Max Emfinger of Houston rates Nebraska and UCLA as the top two recruiting schools in the country, not so much on who they get in a single year, but on their systems.

"Nebraska is just very, very thorough," he explained. "They're kind of funny in that they'll go after a kid who hasn't gotten a lot of publicity or isn't highly recruited. They do the best job in the country of finding the diamond in the rough."

"Also, both schools give their recruiting coordinator a lot of independence and authority as to who will



Broderick Thomas

actually be recruited. This makes for very decisive and effective recruiting; you can act very quickly when you've got to."

Emfinger likes the '87 Husker recruiting cast but feels the most successful schools this season were Texas A&M, Notre Dame, Florida and Pitt, hands down. "Those schools were so far ahead of everybody else, it wasn't even close," he said after signing day.

MORE RECRUITING

Same subject — different sport. UNL women's volleyball Coach Terry Pettit cashed in on his team's spectacular No. 2 finish this year by signing a trio of stars. Val Novak (Oak Lawn, Ill.) is considered one of the premier setters in the nation and led her high school team to the No. 1 ranking in America.

Twins, Sue (6-foot-1) and Sara Hesch (6-2), also join the team. Both are standouts in track and basketball as well. They hail from Wahpeton, North Dakota where their current high school volleyball team is ranked No. 1 in the state.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Sports Illustrated must be given credit for tenacity. The national sports

magazine has redirected its investigative story that was supposed to lay open the entrails of Nebraska football, and instead has sent its ace reporter Armen Keteyian to Miami to pursue the Miami Hurricanes.

The thinking evidently was that focusing only on Nebraska would be unfair in light of college football's army of teams that have been cited for questionable conduct.

Faint hope still remains for Nebraska to be featured when and if the story is published, perhaps not until next football season.

FAST FRIENDS

Broderick Thomas hosted high school star Mickey Joseph for his campus visit and was one of the first people to talk with him over the phone after Joseph signed on February 12.

Thomas, who was helping answer phone calls in the football office that afternoon, smiled and said, "You did it!" They proceeded to speculate about national championships and all the fun they would have in Lincoln next fall. Thomas thinks highly of the youngster with the thick Cajun accent. Joni Holtzen, football secretary who talked with Joseph often to coordinate meetings throughout recruiting, set up the Thomas-to-Joseph call and the high schooler answered in his usual telephone voice, "Yo!"

"He's going to be a great quarterback," Thomas said. "And he's a smart kid, too. I knew he was coming to Nebraska all along. He had a great visit here and said right then that this was the place for him."

Thomas and quarterback Steve Taylor seem to be the Huskers' ace on-campus recruiters as several of this year's signees raved about the fun they had in Lincoln



Steve Taylor

with the pair and how the Husker standouts made them feel at home.

LONG GONE

There is never a perfect recruiting season and 1987 had its share of players who got away from Nebraska. Stellar running back Ricky Davis of Omaha Creighton Prep cast his ballot with Stanford even though the Huskers were after him. George Achola, Davis' teammate and Husker signee, said the standout student opted for Stanford because of its unmatched academics. "We weren't really surprised because Ricky had been hinting pretty strongly for a couple of weeks before he committed," said Dave Gillespie. Tim Ryan of Kansas City was a superstar linebacker who signed with Notre Dame. The Irish sniffed throughout Nebraska but didn't get a single signee from the Cornhusker state.

The Huskers also recruited option quarterback Kenny Ford (Port Arthur, Texas) early but he verbally committed to Oklahoma then shocked everyone in the known football universe by signing with Oklahoma State. When the dust had settled, OU did not sign a single quarterback this year.

What makes the defection even more wild, though, is that OSU boasts a standout quarterback (Mike Gundy)

who will only be a sophomore next fall, and the Pokes have certainly indicated they intend to throw the ball, what with All-Big Eight receiver Hart Lee Dykes leading the league in receptions last year.

Nebraska also sought massive running back (6-2, 230) George Hemingway of Colton, California. However, he signed with Colorado. Another runner, Emmitt Smith, signed with Florida where he will try to break into their two-back offense. "It doesn't make sense," said Emfinger. "Smith could have been a star in Nebraska's I-formation, but he's going to be just another runner in Florida's two-back system. They've signed a juco kid that can put Smith in the dirt."

WELCOME HOME

Former Husker receivers coach Gene Huey returned to Lincoln on Thursday after signing day and was greeted with a warm welcome. Coach George Darlington escorted Huey around the offices and stadium for some handshaking and story telling. Huey's replacement is Ron Brown who previously served on the Brown University staff in the Ivy League. Early indications are that the fashionable Brown will be head and shoulders above the rest of the staff in the running for 'Best Dressed Coach' honors.

BEDLAM AGAIN

Not only did the Huskers outduel OU for two high school football recruits, but Coach Tim Neumann's wrestling team beat Oklahoma one week earlier. It was the first UNL win over the Sooners since 1949 and the loss knocked OU out of the nation's Top 20 while the Huskers continued to climb toward the Top 10.

The duel was close, even

tied 16-16, but the Huskers decided the last three matches for only their third victory over Oklahoma in 25 meetings.

A WIN IS A WIN

This is the Burn-the-Game-Film section. One can only imagine the depression that set in following Iowa State's one-point basketball loss to Nebraska on national football signing day. Coach Johnny Orr's team had the ball in Nebraska's court with 11 seconds to play and mysteriously dribbled the ball aimlessly until the one-second mark when they tried to call timeout at the top of the key. Time expired without them even taking a shot. That victory assured Nebraska of its 14th consecutive winning season.

SMARTS

Senior guard Brian Carr made the Academic All-Big Eight team for the second year in a row. He was joined on the first unit by Husker forward Bill Jackman.

Carr posted a 3.05 grade point average in physical education, while Jackman is doing graduate studies in finance and made a 3.45, the highest GPA on the all-star team.

Carr, a native of Muncie, Indiana, is approaching the Big Eight record for career assists and currently ranks in the Top 10 in steals, assists and three-point average in Big Eight play.

Jackman, a native of Grant, Nebraska, has averaged almost nine points and seven rebounds for the Huskers this season.

Others on the first team were forward Dave Sieger of Oklahoma, forward Mark Dobbins of Kansas State and center Scott Wilke of Colorado.

Nebraska was the only team to have two players on the first unit. ♦

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Birthdate: April 23, 1966
Birthplace: Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

Parents: Richard and Irene Haden

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio

High School: Lincoln East

High School Activities:

Cheerleader, Choir, Student Council

College Activities: Gamma Phi Social Chairman; Psi Kappa Psi 'Little Sister,' Disney World Intern

College Major: Speech Communications

How I became a Husker

Hostess: I heard about it from my sorority sisters.

Hobbies: Jogging, singing, playing piano.

I think college athletics are important because: they teach unity, team work and leadership.

If I were a football player, the position I would most like to play would be: quarterback. Then you can direct the action and take the team in a forward direction. I like to see progress.

The toughest part of being a hostess is: making players feel comfortable and at the same time answering their questions about academic and social life.

The most satisfying part of being a hostess is: when parents want to take a picture of you standing with their son. It's nice when the parents have a good time.



This Husker Hostess feature is brought to you by **Lincoln Tour & Travel**



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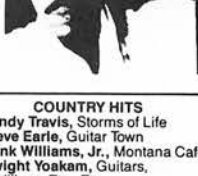
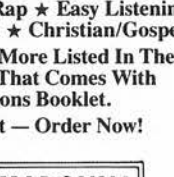
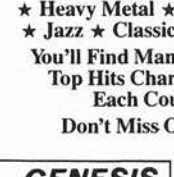
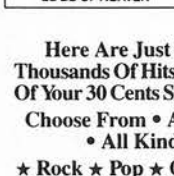
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 - 5 George Strait, #7
- BLACK HITS**
- 1 Cameo, Word Up
 - 2 Anita Baker, Rapture
 - 3 Run-D.M.C., Raising Hell
 - 4 Oran "Juice" Jones, Juice
 - 5 Lionel Richie, Dancing On The Ceiling
- JAZZ HITS**
- 1 Andreas Vollenweider, Down To The Moon
 - 2 Spyro Gyra, Breakout
 - 3 Pieces Of A Dream, Joyride
 - 4 Bob James/David Sanborn, Double Vision
 - 5 Yellow Jackets, Shades
- CLASSICAL HITS**
- 1 Vladimir Horowitz, Horowitz: The Studio Recordings
 - 2 Vladimir Horowitz, Horowitz: The Last Romantic
 - 3 Kathleen Battle, Kathleen Battle Sings Mozart
 - 4 Branford Marsalis, Romances For Saxophone
 - 5 Luciano Pavarotti, Anniversary
- CHRISTIAN/GOSPEL HITS**
- 1 Rev. M. Brunson/Thompson Community Choir, There Is Hope
 - 2 The Williams Brothers, Hand And Hand
 - 3 Douglas Miller, Unspeakable Joy
 - 4 Shirley Caesar, Celebration
 - 5 Sandra Crouch, We're Waiting

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It would be bad news, the kind that would make any hot-blooded, competitive coach wince. Maybe even get mad. No coach wants to hear his potential state track champion gurgling down the toilet. Track titles don't come along often in quiet, rural towns like Winnebago, a pheasant hunter's paradise of cornfields, brush and timber in northeast Nebraska. It would be *Paradise Lost*, though, if Darwin Snyder chose to bypass track his senior year at Winnebago High School. Only three years earlier he had qualified for the state meet in four events as a freshman. As a senior, he could score enough points to win the team title by himself — a one-man team championship.

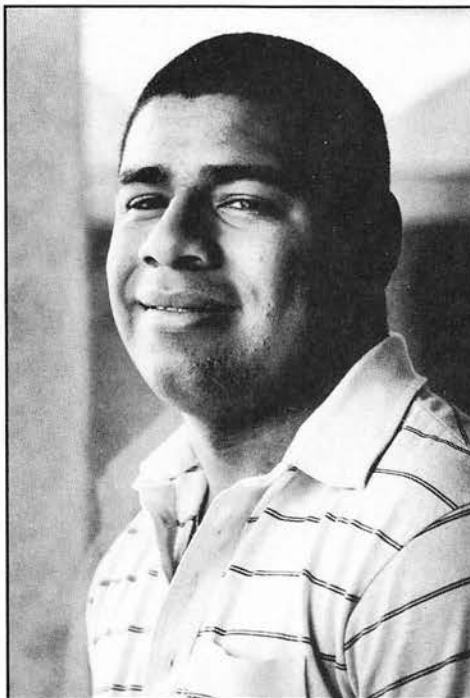
But after four years of high school sports and two months of recruiting anxiety, Snyder had signed a national football letter of intent with Nebraska and was tired, sad, even scared. He would so enjoy the time off. He dreaded the thought of disappointing Coach Dallas Ross.

Snyder, quiet and tentative, sat down to talk with Ross, like they had talked for years: coach-to-player, teacher-to-student, friend-to-friend. There was one thing Snyder could not do. He could not look Ross in the eye. It was impossible for Snyder to do. This young man, who yearned for acceptance all his life, was about to end his coach's chance for a track championship. While his body and mind ached for a spring without sports, the words did not come out.

"It's all right with me if you don't go

drama of a young man's life-long struggle to be accepted for what he is.

Today, Snyder is a true freshman, an I-back, who spends his winter months, like other rookies, pumping weights, trying to get bigger, bigger, bigger. Since the first day of practice last August, he's been catching up. He was a small, small back from a small, small school. At 5-foot-9 and 195 pounds, Snyder gained 20 pounds as a freshman. He had to. For all the publicity he received as a high school wing back (television stations loved



Darwin Snyder

the "Small Town Kid Makes Good" story), Snyder was moved immediately to I-back — land of the giants. It's not that you have to be big-big-big, but at Nebraska, it's sort of expected you should be an All-American. If Mike Rozier (who turned those Sooners into Husker fodder) can do it, shouldn't you? Expectations are big.

Snyder only aggravated that Saliva Syndrome with his absolutely outlandish high school credentials: 2,217 yards rushing as a senior with an average of 12 yards per carry. Sure, Winnebago played eight-man football, but those would be great stats in two-man football. Big numbers. Remember Carl Sagan...Mr. Cosmos...prime-time scientist? Reading Snyder's stats was like reading one of Sagan's books on the size of Neptune.

His high school stats only made his freshman injuries more agonizing. First it was one hamstring, then the other. Even before the Kansas State blizzard, Snyder's challenges were snowballing, from simple home sickness to the internal frustrations of a perfectionist personality.

It was almost like his childhood all over again.

As a four year old, Snyder ran with a different crowd: adults. Cigar-chomping, beer-drinking, cussing construction workers. They made handy stand-in parents. Dad had long since left. Mom was disinterested and his grandparents filled in as best they could. A building project provided jobs for the workers, who took a warm liking to Snyder and Snyder liked

A DREAM COMING TRUE

out for track," Ross said, gently wiping away the tension, like smoothing the wrinkles from a bedspread to make things the way they should be — comfortable, familiar, agreeable.

Snyder smiled.

"I was thinking about it, but I wanted to see if it was okay with you," he said.

Without fanfare, Snyder's legendary high school athletic career was over and Winnebago would tumble back into anonymity. Its favorite son (perhaps favorite, perhaps just celebrated) was bound for Big Red football. He would face new obstacles; big time challenges that could turn into big time success or big time failure, although it's hard to imagine a football game that could compare with the

**Darwin Snyder's life
looked more like a
nightmare until he
turned things around
with hard work and
charm.**

By Mark Owens

that. They were his friends. He had cute, round features and curly hair (Snyder's biological mother was a Winnebago Indian and his dad was black), and the construction crew renamed him "Flip" in honor of comedian Flip Wilson. He made them laugh, but in a queer sort of way. The crew had taught him every dirty word possible. For almost two years he was just one of the guys.

Only trouble was, the workers were time-clock buddies and when the day's work was done, they scattered. Snyder scattered, too, looking for more friends, someone to fill a void. Joe Snyder ran a filling station down the road. 'Fill 'er up.' In most cases he filled gas tanks, but after watching Darwin run the streets of Winnebago, he took an interest in filling the young

child's special needs. The gas station became Darwin's after-hours hang-out and soon Joe and wife Carol Snyder got attached to "Flip." Their wayfaring companion spent more and more time with the Snyders and that relationship grew for two years until a fatal illness took Joe, but not before other lasting relationships were started.

The first was with Joe's brother Lawrence. Along with wife Linda, they too embraced the little roustabout and, after Joe's passing, they adopted Darwin.

The second was Joe's cousin, Ross. Ross became aware of the unique youngster, on a casual basis at first. Always smiling, always eager to please, Snyder had the same effect on Ross as most everyone he met. Later, as his teacher and coach in Winnebago, Ross would watch Snyder grow and struggle for acceptance in a community that ran a little low on that commodity. It seems the Indian reservation was literally a nation apart, complete with its own customs and ways of thinking. "Among the people of Winnebago, whites were tolerated," Ross explained. "Blacks were not."

"If someone didn't know about his biological mother, they couldn't tell by looking that he had Indian blood. As a kid, he really did look a little like Flip Wilson."

In a town as small as Winnebago (more people get athletic scholarships at UNL than live in Winnebago), kids like Snyder naturally stood out. In that environment, it didn't seem to matter that he was a warm kid, a people pleaser; the kind of youngster that wanted to touch and be touched. Mostly people just noticed that he was different.

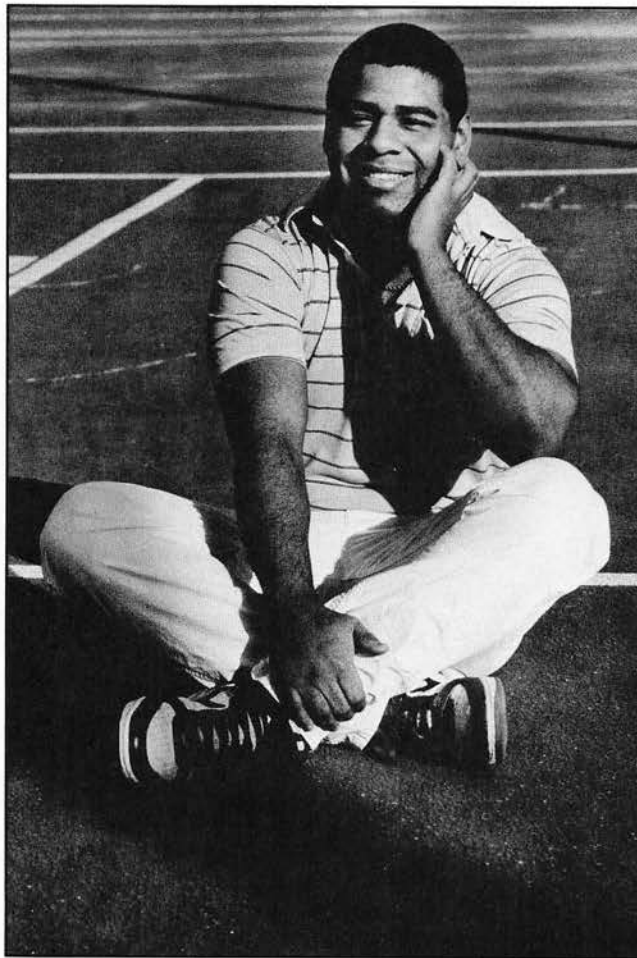
Ross saw that other side, though, over and over again.

By the sixth grade, Snyder's folks had coached him into using a brand-new set of adjectives, nouns and intensifiers. The rough edge was melting away as he came to know Ross as "teacher." At first, Snyder surprised Ross with apples, candy and gum — some special treat to show his appreciation. Soon the surprise wore off. The gift-giving was incessant.

"That's really very nice, but you don't have to bring me gifts everyday, Darwin, because I'd think the same of you whether you brought them or not," Ross pleaded.

But Snyder continued the shower of treats as if every day was Christmas. It was the least he could do. In Ross, he had found his own special holiday and at the beginning of each class he

Snyder is afraid to pinch himself; he might wake up.



would rush to the teacher's desk and they would exchange gifts; he eagerly unwrapped Ross' gift of friendship. Then came the candy. It was the least he could do.

By that time, though, the entire community of Winnebago was finding Snyder hard to ignore. Still in grade school, he played short stop in the local men's slow-pitch softball league.

"I would like to have met Darwin's dad," says Ross, who today is a counselor at Torrington High School in Wyoming. "He must have been a hell of an athlete."

"But, you know, there are a lot of talented kids in big city ghettos. Places a lot worse than Winnebago. And there are super talented athletes who probably had a rougher family life than Darwin. But there aren't many who have put themselves to work and done as much as he has with that talent."

"Darwin will walk through fences to reach his goals."

It runs in the family.

Brother Ernest has struggled with cerebral palsy since birth. Today, he has his own apartment in Lincoln.

One year older, Ernest grew up apart from his younger brother — foster homes and illness separated the siblings until they tore down the barriers and shared their first ever Christmas together in 1986.

Another emotional Demolition Derby of sorts took place on the Winnebago High School football field as Coach Ross faced a long-standing tradition of athletic apathy. Before Ross took over head coaching duties, WHS had won one game in five years.

"The kids felt sorry for themselves," he explained. "In a typical four-hour practice, we'd spend half of that just talking. Getting our confidence back up, making the kids feel special."

Snyder is an example, not an exception to what happened at WHS... an example.

Once less than a stellar student, Snyder responded to Ross and his emphasis on academics, not only in grade school, but through junior high and high school. Dutifully, Snyder showed his report cards to Ross. He was going to make the man proud of him. Upon graduation, he was class salutatorian.

On the football field, he became a



Snyder's smile is easy and sincere.

quiet leader, even as a freshman.

"Something would go badly and here's this freshman telling them to get serious," said Ross. "Even the seniors knew who the leader was."

By this time Ross and Snyder had become fast friends. Ross's two boys, Greg and Scott, idolized the town's sports hero who spent hours at their home, playing games with them and talking with their dad, man-to-man.

Barely in high school, Snyder showed the maturity one would expect from someone who had focused on adults as friends all his life; the contrast of a man in a boy's body.

"To this day, Darwin still has an innocent look," said Ross. "It's his features, but it's also his personality — very sincere, trusting and open with people. But in a lot of ways, he's more mature than me. He's serious; a perfectionist."

Snyder would corner Ross and talk football. What would it take to be good? What would it take to be great. Great! More practice, more goals, more weight lifting?

For three years, Snyder never missed a day of weight training. By his sophomore year he had already set the goal of making the Nebraska All-State team, which he later did. As a junior, he aimed for the target of winning a scholarship to play Husker football, which he did. As a senior, in the smallest of small towns, he set his ultimate goal — to play football in the National Football League.

Keep in mind, someone from Winnebago has already done that.

Steve Zabel retired from the New England Patriots in 1979 and soon he

regularly returned for pheasant hunting in Winnebago, where he had spent a year of grade school before moving to Colorado. His mother's family was from Winnebago, home to this day of Uncle Walt Nelson who served as school custodian from the 1920s until his retirement this year.

Uncle Walt faithfully monitored Zabel's college career at Oklahoma in the late '60s and his long pro career. He wouldn't let Zabel forget he was from Winnebago or that he was a success; the stream of newspaper clippings bearing Zabel's name was steady — more mail from Uncle Walt.

And Zabel, an independent business man in Guthrie, Oklahoma, will not forget the hunting, fishing, camping and mischief of a young boy.

"Some people might remember me another way," he explained. Out of necessity, his mother went to the grade school, needing to take her son out of class.

"I need to see Steve Zabel."

"Who?"

"Steve Zabel. He's a student here."

"I'm sorry. There's no Steve Zabel here."

"What!"

"What does he look like?"

"Dark hair. Tall. Big for his age."

"Oh! You mean Tommy Whitdeer!"

Whitdeer or Zabel, by either name he was Winnebago's first pro star. But he wanted a little more out of Winnebago than just an annual hunting trip and fish fry. After Uncle Walt had sent his nephew stories about a hot-shot wing back, Zabel wanted Snyder in Sooners red.

Impressed by what he had seen and heard, the former OU all-star tight end alerted Oklahoma coaches to take a look at Snyder, who by his junior year was a legitimate star.

About this time, success was beginning to bite back at Snyder. With his athletic reputation preceeding him, Snyder would accept only the best from himself and teammates. Sometimes, both fell short.

Guilt, blame, depression followed. The once-enthusiastic smile would fade into dark moodiness. There is an ugly side to perfectionism. When you enjoy so much making someone proud of you, it hurts just as much when doubt and disappointment (especially the fear of someone else's) creeps in.

Through that spectacular senior year, though, disappointment was held to a minimum. As the recruiting season began, Iowa State was knocking down the door to get Snyder. State schools were excited. Oklahoma and Nebraska were taking a hard look, and OU proposed that Snyder walk on. But walking on at OU had not been the goal Snyder had set the year before as a junior.

A week before signing day last year, Husker assistant coach Dan Young returned to Winnebago. This time, he wasn't there to talk, or look at more film. He was there to offer a scholarship.

"Oh yes," Ross beamed, "I was proud. It was the happiest day of Darwin's life."

After one year of Husker football, Snyder has enjoyed the spotlight and acceptance this year's recruits are enjoying. He has also seen the down side: injuries, sitting on the bench, making new friends, having to prove one's self everyday in practice. Away from the familiar security of a small town, he has been forced to learn a new acceptance...of himself. That one person rarely deserves all the credit or all the blame. "He's learning to accept Darwin as Darwin," says Ross.

"I am real pleased," Coach Tom Osborne says of Snyder. "He comes from a small school and small program and is making great progress."

Snyder actually embraces the opportunity of a red-shirt year, a time to think through goals, relax and improve individually so that team success will follow. Nothing fancy, nothing amazing. It's a simple idea. One that's easy to accept. ♦

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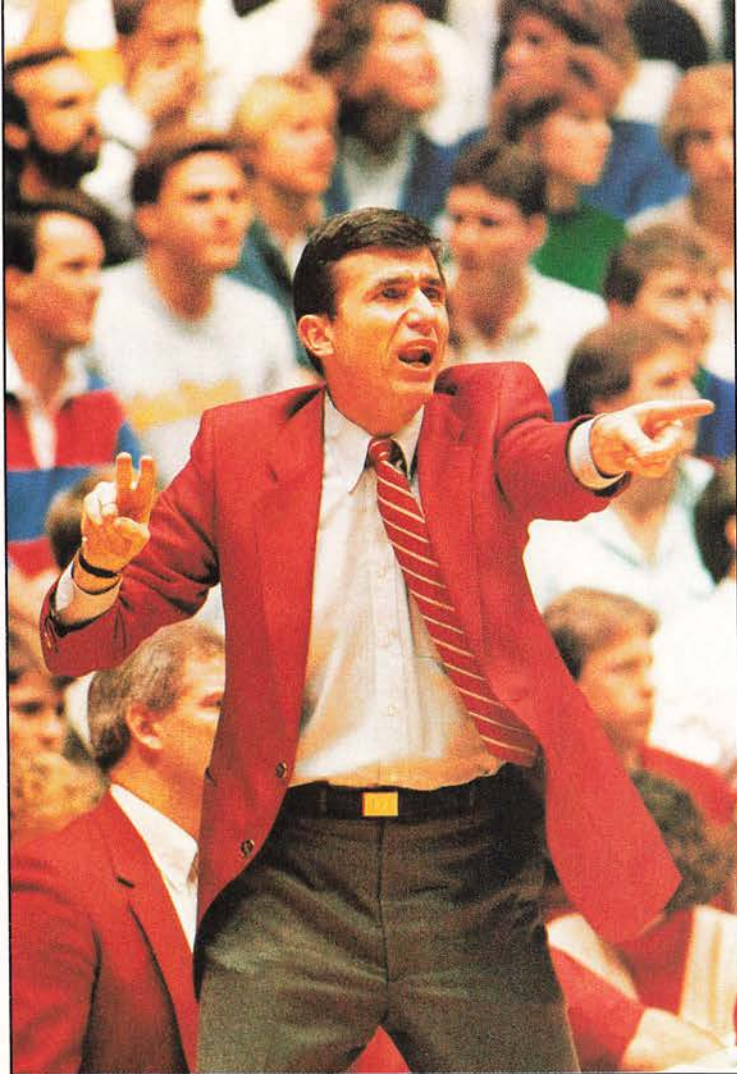
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Nee Orchestrates

Coaching basketball requires the right moves.

By Mike Babcock

You wonder, sometimes, if Danny Nee imagines himself as Eugene Ormandy or Leopold Stokowski, standing before the Philadelphia Orchestra, baton raised, musicians with instruments poised, waiting to set the music in motion, to make it come alive.

Nebraska's first-year head basketball coach has drawn the comparison himself on more than one occasion.

The master, the maestro...

"I think it's the coach's job to orchestrate, to coordinate everything going on, direct the players into becoming a finely tuned unit," Nee said, recently, while he sat in his office at the Bob Devaney Sports Center during a rare break in his schedule.

The maestro metaphor isn't limited to the obvious organizational skills any coach must have, however.

In Nee's case, it becomes more than a sports cliché. The comparison can be extended to his behavior on the court, when the lights dim, after the long hours of rehearsal.

He has the temperament and the mannerisms of a maestro.

Nee doesn't just coach; he composes then conducts, with facial expressions and arm movements worthy of Leonard Bernstein or Seiji Ozawa.

Communication, that's what it's all about. And "I don't think we do enough," Nee said.

From the time the ball goes up for the opening tip until the final gun sounds, Nee communicates, through actions as well as words.

He rarely sits during a game, preferring to go down on his haunches, or one knee, until the situation requires that he stand and signal to his players, by pulling on his tie or motioning with his hands.

Nee is animated — he probably always made good grades in public speaking and debate classes — but not by nervousness.

"I don't feel tense during the game," he said. "Usually going into a game, I get butterflies. That kind of nervousness, I think, is good because I know I'm ready. It's afterward, win or lose, coming down, that you feel the real nervousness."

Nee maintains a constant dialogue, not only with his assistants and players in the game, but also with the players on the bench, particularly "the subs who know they're going in," he said.

Those who aren't playing can still contribute.

"That's another set of eyes watching the game, another mind working, another body helping," said Nee. When a player comes out, he usually sits down between two assistant coaches so "we can tell him what's going on, what we'd like him to do the next time he goes in."

Nebraska is playing Missouri at the Devaney Sports Center in a game the Cornhuskers will lose because of free throws, the 37 of 45 made by the Tigers and the 14 of 17 missed by Nebraska.

The Cornhuskers' Anthony Bailous is guarding Derrick Chievous, the Big Eight's leading scorer, well on his way to a 26-point night.

Chievous, a master at drawing fouls, moves down the sideline in front of the Nebraska bench, and Nee



Husker Show

slides along, encouraging Bailous to use a proper defensive stance. Bailous is called for a foul—one of 31 charged to the Cornhuskers this particular night.

Nee looks on in disbelief.

Later, Nebraska's Brian Carr draws a whistle and a foul for blocking after a drive to the basket by Chievous knocks him on the hardwood floor.

Nee's face is contorted in anger.

Afterward, he admits, he felt "irate at times."

Nee declines to comment on the officiating for the record, however, using the standard coach's response. He'll have to see film of the game.

But, he adds: "I'd like to mail the film to the officials, too."

Apparently, he told them so during the game, although he didn't try to show them up with a public outburst.

There's a time and place for that, and this wasn't either.

Unlike some Big Eight coaches, Missouri's Norm Stewart for instance, Nee says he doesn't try to "work" officials during a game.

"You've got to let them know when you think they've made a mistake. But I try to give them the benefit of the doubt. I think they have integrity;

they're working hard, trying to do the best job they can," he said. "I prefer not to bother with the officials."

"When I'm talking to the officials, I can't be coaching my team."

"I find them a distraction."

Nee won't hide his feelings, though.

After the Cornhuskers lost to Creighton at Omaha's Civic Auditorium early in the season, Nee openly criticized an official who had charged Nebraska's Derrick Vick with an intentional foul late in the game.

Nee came off the bench, out of the coach's box, and onto the court to argue, behavior that earned him not one but two technical fouls.

"The game was going along fine. Then it's obvious the official is from a certain conference because when Tony (Creighton Coach Barone) tells him to, he starts making those calls," Nee said. "It's ridiculous, and I was gonna let him know that I knew he was a jerk. How he distinguishes those from the other 50,000 fouls called in a game is beyond me."

His emotions rarely surface to that degree any more.

"When I was young, I was more of a screamer," Nee said. "I think I've

matured in that respect."

He's matured to the point that he can joke about it. After Nebraska had dropped back-to-back games at Iowa State and Kansas, Nee told reporters: "My adolescence has been under control. You sit there like a gentleman, get crucified, shake hands, say all the right things and leave."

"And they (opposing coaches) pat you on the head and say, 'Come back again, little boy.' I'm a good role model."

"Even (Kansas State Coach) Lonnie Kruger . . . he beats you by 32 points and says, 'Hey Danny, you're doing a great job.'"

Because he is a coach, Nee understands why Indiana's volatile Bobby Knight would throw a chair in anger. "I've done things like that," said Nee who was recruited to Marquette (where he spent his freshman year) by Al McGuire and served as an assistant at Notre Dame under Digger Phelps, two of college basketball's most colorful personalities.

Nee can be as unpredictable as the most temperamental conductor.

"Sometimes, the frustration comes through," Nee said. "But you've got to be on-guard for that because you can't

MOTIVATING: A Key To Nee's Success

Danny Nee, Nebraska's first-year basketball coach, motivates his players by example. At least according to the Cornhuskers' Bill Jackman, that's how he's been motivated, both on the court and in the classroom.

Jackman's play, as well as his words, have been an excellent endorsement of Nee's motivational skills. "He gets the most out of you," Jackman said.

As a starter, the former Super-Stater from Class C Perkins County High School in Grant, Nebraska, who transferred from Duke University after his freshman season, has averaged around 10 points per game and been the team's leading rebounder. Jackman has responded to Nee's challenge.

"Coach Nee wants you to do things right," said Jackman, who languished under former Cornhusker Coach Moe Iba.

Last season, Jackman played an average of less than five minutes a game, shooting 35.7 percent from the field and grabbing 15 rebounds, total.

Nee's arrival from Ohio University meant a new lease on life for Jackman, who's always been a crowd favorite.

But it hasn't been just as a player that Jackman has benefited. He completed a degree in finance first semester and is playing second semester as a graduate student.

Nee suggested that Jackman start his graduate studies early and take a grad-level class last semester, but by the time he tried to enroll in one, the deadline had passed.

A student with his ability — Jackman had a cumulative B-plus average — shouldn't have allowed that to happen, Nee told him. So out of conscience as much as interest, Jackman began reading the specialized magazines in his field, on his own, during time he could have been in the graduate class.

Jackman regularly visited the library and read magazines like *Business Week*, "stuff I wouldn't be reading, ordinarily," he said.

According to Jackman, Nee expects his players to be successful in whatever they do, and his expectations can't be ignored or completely achieved.

It's difficult to waste time when "he works so hard," Jackman said of Nee. "He gets started early in the morning, so you feel like you should, too."

coach with emotion. As a coach, you reach a point of frustration. I try to keep it defused and not take things out on the officials or my players. I can't say it won't happen. It probably will. But I try to stay under control."

That isn't easy for someone as intensely competitive as Nee.

The first season of rebuilding a program is filled with frustrations which manifest themselves in losing. Still, Nee can joke about them.

During a weekly news conference, he said he was much more comfortable in his job after having experienced Big Eight competition, "physically seeing" players like Danny Manning of Kansas, Norris Coleman of Kansas State and Jeff Grayer of Iowa State.

It's like "when your wife is cooking a new stew that you've eaten once," said Nee. "You know what to expect, so you know how many Roloids to have. I know how many bottles of Maalox to take now. Every time I go on the road, I take two bottles of Maalox and a bottle of aspirin. Before, I was only taking the Maalox."

Nee differentiates coaching style from coaching philosophy.

His bench behavior falls in the first category. "Coaching style is your personality, the way you dress, the way you act, how you handle the press, how you recruit, how you relate to people. Some people are very natural at it," Nee said. "Others are introverted."

"I think my style is very open. I'm

easy to talk to; I relate well to people. That's my personality."

On the other hand, coaching philosophy is "how you are on the bench. That's completely different," said Nee.

"I really feel that's been developed through the years, through experience, trial and error."

According to Nee, some coaches are inventors. North Carolina's Dean Smith, for example, who invented the four-corners offense, and Marion, Ohio, High School's Bill Green, who invented the match-up zone defense.

Nee doesn't consider himself an inventor. "I'm a copier . . . well, not a copier as much as an imitator," he said. "I like to take things that I think have been successful and then fit them, adjust them to my style, my coaching philosophy."

His philosophy, "very simply is, you win championships on defense," said Nee. "I like the multiple defenses, man and zone. I'm not one that you have to play one (defense) and stay with it."

"You have to adjust your personnel to what's working. I like the multiple offense, attacking, up-tempo, the fastbreak, and when you don't have it, controlling the basketball, getting the high-percentage shot."

Nee's behavior during a game isn't an imitation, though. It's unique to him.

He can be as entertaining as the game itself, on the same level as Stewart or Oklahoma's Billy Tubbs.

"He's really animated. He'll chew

out the refs, take off his coat, pace the sidelines," said Zan Hale, a sports writer for the *Columbus, Ohio, Dispatch* who covered Nee when he was at Ohio University. "He was fun to cover."

Nee, who's from Brooklyn, did well as "the big-city kid in the small town" of Athens, Ohio, according to Hale.

Lincoln, which has more in common with Athens than Brooklyn, has provided an eager audience for the maestro.

Season-ticket sales increased 10 percent and attendance has been up in the Devaney Sports Center.

Nee has orchestrated Cornhusker fans the way he's orchestrated the Cornhuskers. Nebraska drew an audience of more than 10,000 for a Feb. 1 game against Oklahoma State, on a Sunday afternoon with unseasonal temperatures of around 60 degrees.

Such a response wasn't surprising, Nee said after the game, which Nebraska held on to win, 73-66.

He's come to expect it.

Nee always wears a coat and tie on game day so that his appearance underscores his professionalism.

During the Kansas game in Lawrence, some Jayhawk fans sitting behind the Nebraska bench kept referring to Nee as a mortician, trying to distract him, to divert his attention.

Nee smiled when reminded of it. The suit was navy blue, not black.

"You can't look at them," he said of the fans. "Because when you do, they know you're listening." ♦

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Wouldn't this be grand," mused Norm Hitzges of his 1981 plan for a college playoff unveiled in *Sport* magazine.

Imagine the unimaginable: 11-1 Nebraska battling 9-2 Notre Dame for the NCAA national championship. That's right. An NCAA playoff, where teams who almost never play during the regular season or in bowls would be hurled together for history-making games. Ah, what a classic to see the Huskers (or anybody for that matter) beat the brains out of Oklahoma at a neutral playoff site before 100,000 fans and a world-wide TV audience...or even an underdog struggle with an unbeaten Texas and a Colorado team with three losses, just like Villanova in the NCAA basketball tourney a few years ago. It's hard to picture the Buffs playing for a title, but that's what they said about Villanova, too.

"Boy, was this a great idea!" For so long, everyone thought that in order to have a playoff in college football, you'd have to get rid of the bowls. Hitzges' system dispelled that notion — fast. Under his plan the revenue-producing bowls would be used in forming a four-phased playoff system that would conclude with the crowning of the national champion in the Rose Bowl.

It wasn't a bad idea. After all, the bowl structure could remain intact. The revenue produced from such a system would soar. And, college football would crown a legitimate national champion. "The plan works," vows Hitzges, a Dallas radio (KLIF) sports director. "Every objection to it that people have can be explained. It wouldn't take money away from the bowls, but it sure would take it away from their people."

"Their people" being the "Martini Joes" who spend in excess of \$40,000 (for some bowls) each year flying in and out of the Lincolns, Norman and Boulders of the world, to scout teams that have an automatic invitation, assuming they win their conference championship. That's like repeatedly asking your wife to marry you.

Hitzges' plan (as diagramed on page 43) calls for the minor bowls to be used as early-round playoffs and the major bowls to be utilized as later-round games with the finalists meet-

Playoff System Remains Just A Dream

By Kevin Jeffrey
& Mark Owens

ing in Pasadena for a collegiate super bowl. Unfortunately, the NCAA yawned at Hitzges' plan. Maybe the timing just wasn't right. In fact, at this point, it may never be right.

It's been some 49 seasons since college basketball coaches wrestled control of post-season action from the almighty National Invitation Tournament (NIT) and established their own playoff system under the auspices of the NCAA.

Today, the tournament and its prestigious Final Four have flourished, carving an irrevocable niche in the crowded halls of American sports. Its first year of existence notwithstand-

ing, the tourney has been a financial and media bonanza for the NCAA and its member schools. A first-round game alone could bring an institution in excess of \$100,000. A Final Four appearance can mean \$892,966 for a participating team.

Since its inception, the basketball playoff field has been expanded to include 64 teams. An expansion that eventually led to the demise of the once predominant NIT.

Two-score and nine years later, some college football coaches seek a parting of the ways from the corporate world by pondering a playoff option that would take the "mythical" out of national championship. Just how that end will be accomplished is the task of an NCAA sub-committee commissioned for the second time in four years to study playoff possibilities.

This time around, the committee has been specifically asked to study the feasibility of instituting a one-game playoff; a more definitive mandate than given the previous committee.

"Last time we did it, there wasn't that much interest," points out University of Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds, who headed both committees. "The fact 70 million people watched the Fiesta Bowl (Miami and Penn State for the national championship) is indicative of the interest in a playoff system."

Problem is, the multi-bowl system has been around so long that it has made college football the odd sport out on a yearly schedule clustered with one-day championship events that have long been recognized as "the" sporting events to watch. Thus, the never-ending controversy: Should there be a playoff in college football?

While fan interest and additional revenue are given as rationale for instituting some type of playoff system, the cards are heavily stacked against one. So loaded is the evidence against, pushing onward would appear fruitless.

How does one gun down the idea of playoffs in college football...shall we count the ways?

— Strongest opposition, outside the bowls, comes from college presidents. The current mood in college athletics concerning a championship playoff is

extremely conservative — the result of recent reform by the presidents' commission. If anything, there'll be more cutbacks.

— Organizers of long-standing, established bowls are also against a playoff. And don't sell these guys short. The economical sword they wield may be too strong a force, particularly for anyone entertaining thoughts of merely shrugging them aside. Last season alone, the Fiesta, Rose, Orange and Sugar Bowls pumped more than 150,000,000 hard and traceable dollars into Tempe, Pasadena, Miami and New Orleans.

— Over-saturation of college football has networks in a tempered mood. College football is easy to obtain. There are too many games already.

— The road to any playoff would have to go through Pasadena, where two of the top conferences, the Pac-10 and Big-10, encompass some of the nation's top media markets; both are against a playoff.

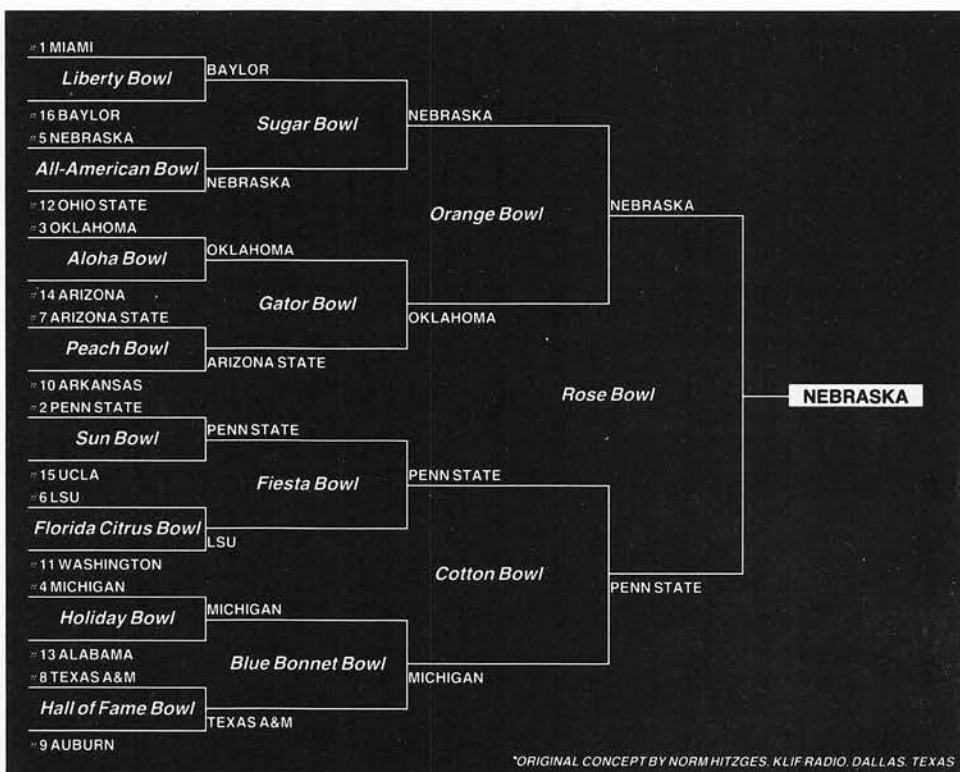
— Bowls provide guaranteed money not based on ratings. Seventeen bowls pump more than \$40,000,000 into college football. \$22,000,000 is the payoff for teams competing in the current NCAA basketball tournament.

— Under the bowl structure, 17 of 34 teams have an opportunity to end their season on a winning note. A crucial point considering recruiting. Many coaches fear not making the playoffs could be used as a recruiting tactic against them.

"A tremendous cloud's hanging over that playoff idea because of this fear of the unknown," said NU Athletic Director Bob Devaney. "Everyone knows the benefits of the current bowl system, but nobody in college football is really certain what a playoff will bring...except the media."

Perhaps one reason the media is the only group pushing for a playoff is because almost everyone else accepts the discourse over playoffs for what it is: a novel idea; good for discussion, not action. In a way, the discussion over whether there should be a college playoff system can be likened to the designated hitter issue in professional baseball. Should there or shouldn't there be a DH? Not even Peter Uberroth knows for sure.

You won't find college power brokers pondering whether or not there should be a playoff. When it comes to that issue, they've made it known that they feel there is too much emphasis on college athletics already. In an ABC poll of the 105 Division I-A schools, 65 chief executives were



adamantly against a playoff; 32 were in favor of a playoff in some form; six abstained from the voting and two failed to return their ballots. That the majority of presidents are against a playoff is puzzling to Dodds, considering the sweeping changes the chief executives have already made in attempts to clean up the sport.

"The biggest issues have been taken care of over the past four years," explained Dodds. "Proposition 48 was a good move. Drug testing was a great move. The death penalty (suspending the program of a school found guilty of repeated violations) was a great move. Cutting back on contact periods for recruiting is a great help. And I think there'll be a study on the amount of time a student-athlete can spend with his sport in a given day for practices and meetings, and I think that's appropriate. They've taken all of the right steps toward reform. There's not much else we can do."

Some others believe differently, particularly Maryland Chancellor John Slaughter, whose memory is still extremely clear concerning the tragic death of Terrapin basketball star Len Bias. Bias, of course, died of a cocaine overdose after being selected as the second choice in the NBA draft by the Boston Celtics.

Slaughter attributes much of the blame for Bias' death on the over-em-

phasis placed on collegiate sports. Slaughter heads the 44-member presidents' commission that instituted much of the new reform in college athletics. The committee is slated to meet again in June to discuss other measures it believes vital in putting "student" back into the term student-athlete.

It's no accident that a great majority of the presidents who oppose a playoff hail from the Pac-10 and Big-10 conferences. Hansen believes that's due to the academic reputation of the schools in those respective conferences. That belief is not without merit.

Northwestern, Purdue, Wisconsin and Michigan of the Big 10 and Stanford, UCLA and USC of the Pac-10 are nationally recognized academic institutions. Of the 42 players named to the Toyota Leadership Awards given annually to the student-athlete who exemplifies outstanding leadership on the playing field, in the classroom and in the community, 26 were members of the Pac-10 and Big-10 conferences. Yet, probably the underlying reason behind their objection to a playoff system may be monetary rather than academic.

Both conferences share a lucrative tie-up with the Rose Bowl, and it may well be that tie-up, along with other bowl tie-ups that have precluded

Huskers Defeat Ohio State, Baylor, Oklahoma

Below, *Huskers Illustrated* has updated Norm Hitzges' playoff scenario, beginning with the opening round all the way through the championship contest. The 16 teams in our scenario are a composite of the final 1986 regular season polls of the *USA Today/CNN* Top 25, the Associated Press and United Press International. Note the playoff games are structured within the time frame of the Christmas holidays.

OPENING ROUND

LIBERTY BOWL — *Memphis, Tennessee, Dec. 11, 7 p.m., #1 Miami vs. #16 Baylor*: A great matchup between two, top defensive teams. Miami's Testaverde finds the going tough against the Bears. Baylor coach Grant Teaff devises a scheme that utilizes the pass-rushing ability of super quick defensive end James Lee, and the secondary skill of the nation's top defensive back, Thomas Everett, to knock off the regular season champs.

ALL-AMERICAN BOWL — *Birmingham, Alabama, Dec. 12, 2 p.m., #5 Nebraska vs. #12 Ohio State*: Both the Cornhuskers and the Buckeyes enter this game smarting from losses to arch-rivals Oklahoma and Michigan. NU quarterback Steve Taylor takes up where he left off in the first half against Oklahoma, and passes for 250 yards and four touchdowns to lead Nebraska into second round action.

ALOHA BOWL — *Honolulu, Hawaii, Dec. 12, 5 p.m., #3 Oklahoma vs. #14 Arizona*: Oklahoma is faced with the challenge of shutting down a classic drop-back passer. This time, the Wildcats' Alfred Jenkins has the problem. The OU defense rises to the occasion, however, forces Jenkins into four interceptions, and wins handily.

PEACH BOWL — *Atlanta, Georgia, Dec. 12, 9 p.m., #7 Arizona*

State vs. #10 Arkansas: John Cooper is finally at a school that commands national attention. The Sun Devils get even more respect after quarterback Jeff Van Raaphorst shreds the Razor-back defense for 500 yards passing to propel ASU to the next round.

SUN BOWL — *El Paso, Texas, Dec. 11, 10 p.m., #2 Penn State vs. #15 UCLA*: The Bruins are led by star tailback Gaston Green who gains 250 yards against a stingy Nittany Lion defense. Penn State, though, withstands Green's performance to register a one-point victory.

FLORIDA CITRUS BOWL — *Orlando, Florida, Dec. 12, 2 p.m., #6 Louisiana State vs. #11 Washington*: LSU coach Bill Arnsparger coaches his final game with the Bengal Tigers. The emotion of the moment gives LSU an advantage Washington coach Don James cannot overcome. As a result, the Tigers "win it for the coach" and advance to the next phase.

HOLIDAY BOWL — *San Diego, California, Dec. 12, 5 p.m., #4 Michigan vs. #13 Alabama*: Ray Perkins is rumored to be leaving the Tide to take over the head coaching job with Tampa Bay of the NFL. Perkins denies the rumors, and the persistent questions prove detrimental as Alabama drops one to Bo and the boys.

HALL OF FAME BOWL — *Tampa, Florida, Dec. 12, 9 p.m., #8 Texas A&M vs. #9 Auburn*: A contest that decides the last spot in the quarter-final round. The winner will face Michigan in the Bluebonnet Bowl. Jackie Sherrill finally gets the monkey off his back at College Station as the Aggies win big behind the cannon arm of Kevin Murray.

QUARTERFINALS

SUGAR BOWL — *New Orleans, Louisiana, Dec. 18, 9 p.m.,*

playoff legislation from being enacted.

Despite popular belief, the bowls are not welcoming committees that assemble yearly merely to judge the pie contest at the annual town fair. No, in fact, they're just the opposite. They're strong, striving businesses that operate year 'round. The bowl game may be the crown jewel of the organization, but it's by no means the only event. Take the Fiesta Bowl for instance. At last count, the Arizona organization sponsored 60 events throughout the year. Who can forget the "Metro-Mobil Fiesta Bowl Hole-In-One" golf outing; or the "Merrill Lynch Fiesta Bowl Mile"; and don't forget "Bob's Big Boy Fiesta Bowl 10K Race."

But, the pre-bowl activities of the Fiesta Bowl are not the stumbling block to a playoff. When it comes to muscle flexing in college football, the "granddaddy" of all the bowls, the Rose, stands head and shoulders above the crowd. There is an abundance of reasons why. Eighty-four years in business is just one of them.

Then there are the ratings. The Fiesta Bowl drew a 25.1 rating for its national championship showdown between Penn State and Miami — one of the highest recorded for a college football game. The Rose Bowl, however, routinely draws excessive ratings — despite rarely displaying a national championship showdown. The

highest on record is a 28.6 rating in its 1980 contest. In addition, the boys from Pasadena can boast of being the only college bowl game viewed live around the world. The Rose is also the only bowl that can count on an automatic turnout in excess of 100,000 fans.

"We know right now what our ticket allotment will be for next year," claimed Tournament of Roses executive Lay Leishman, whose father was the guiding force behind the construction of the Rose Bowl stadium. Leishman and his fellow executives can also count on the Rose Bowl Parade drawing a New Year's Day audience of 125 million viewers. Also, payout to the Pac-10 and Big-10 conferences consistently exceeds the \$11,000,000 mark.

The aforementioned qualities are not projections. They're hard facts. Facts made possible by the union of two of college football's top media conferences. The measuring stick for television appeal by a conference is almost always dictated in accordance with the media markets within the conference's geographical area. In the Pac-10 and Big-10 resides media market cities Detroit, Chicago, St. Paul-Minneapolis, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Seattle, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco and Oakland. The population base in those cities alone justifies the financial merit of the Rose Bowl. Throw in

the rest of the country and it's easy to see the Rose Bowl is sitting on an endless gold mine. And, petitioning for a playoff system seems a detrimental gesture, at best. Certainly, no playoff system can guarantee like amounts of money to a college team, nor is there another bowl tie-up with the drawing power of the Rose Bowl.

It wasn't always that way, though. Before 1947, the year the Rose signed the two conferences to contracts, the bowl rarely sold out. Since that time the game has sold out every year. In fact, the Rose Bowl stadium had to be expanded some 11,000 seats to meet the increased demand.

"Our No. 1 problem is getting more tickets," says Leishman. "I read the statistics on the other (bowl) games and they don't sell out. They send tickets back. Nobody ever sends tickets back to us."

As a result of their immense appeal, any playoff possibility would certainly need the resources of these two super conferences to make a venture into post-season football viable. However, such cooperation is not only unlikely, it's out of the question.

"We're not looking to give it up," assured Leishman. "Anything you've spent 85 years building you won't give up because somebody asked you to. We've got a lot of pride in our event. I don't think there will necessarily be a playoff because people want it."

Compared to the aforementioned

And Penn State On Way To National Playoff Title

Baylor vs. Nebraska: The power of the Cornhuskers proves too much for Baylor. Tyreese Knox goes on a tear for Nebraska, rushing for 220 yards to lead NU to a 24-3 win. Husker coach Tom Osborne uses the momentum to recruit the fertile grounds of Louisiana.

GATOR BOWL — Jacksonville, Florida, 2 p.m., Oklahoma vs. Arizona State: Oklahoma faces yet another passing wiz in Van Raaphorst. Cooper, on the losing side to Barry Switzer on two occasions at Tulsa, wants this one bad. Fortunately for the Sooners, he wanted it too bad. Leading 13-7, Cooper gambles on a fourth-and-one call inside the OU 40 yard line with eight minutes remaining. The gamble backfires and the Sooners drive 60 yards for the game-winning touchdown.

FIESTA BOWL — Tempe, Arizona, Dec. 19, 5 p.m., Penn State vs. LSU: By this time, the sentiment of "winning one for the coach" has worn thin for LSU. The Nittany Lions get a superb performance from All-American linebacker Shane Conlin who corrals 22 ball carriers as Penn State wins it, going away.

BLUEBONNET BOWL — Houston, Texas, Dec. 19, 9 p.m., Michigan vs. Texas A&M: A great matchup between two sound football teams. A battle of the quarterbacks ensues between the Wolverines' Jim Harbaugh and Murray. Harbaugh loses the battle, but Michigan wins the war when the Michigan defense comes up with a safety with two minutes remaining.

SEMIFINALS

ORANGE BOWL — Miami, Florida, Dec. 26, 5 p.m., Oklahoma vs. Nebraska: A semi-final matchup between the Sooners and the Huskers of the Big Eight. Nebraska lost the regular season game to the Sooners, and the pressure is on Osborne to win this time

around. Nebraska falls behind by 14 in the first half, but gets two touchdowns in the fourth quarter. Fortunately, Husker kicker Dale Klein boots a 30-yard field goal and the Huskers beat Oklahoma to take revenge for the 1978 debacle where Nebraska won the regular season tilt only to stumble against the Sooners in bowl action.

COTTON BOWL — Dallas, Texas, Dec. 26, 9 p.m., Michigan vs. Penn State: A battle of two of the nation's most established coaches. Both have won over 80 percent of their games. It's the first meeting between the two teams and the eyes of the nation are on Texas. Conlin, coming off a superb game against LSU, turns in another All-American-type performance, intercepting Wolverines' quarterback Harbaugh twice. As a result, Penn State advances to the Rose Bowl to face Oklahoma.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

ROSE BOWL — Pasadena, California, Jan. 2, 5 p.m., Nebraska vs. Penn State: A classic showdown between Tom Osborne and Joe Paterno as well as two of the nation's best defenses. The Nittany Lions still wince from the 1983 humiliation at the hands of Nebraska. Penn State opens the contest early with, you guessed it, a long scoring pass down the sideline. After trading touchdowns and field goals, the teams enter the fourth quarter with PSU leading 17-10. But, Robb Schnitzler returns his second punt of the year for a touchdown and Broderick Thomas sacks D.J. Dozier for the game-winning safety late in the game. As a result, the Huskers record a 19-17 victory to become college football's first legitimate national champion. Nebraska finishes the season at 12-1 the third such finish in Osborne's career.

injection of more than \$40,000,000 into the veins of college football as a result of 17 bowls, the NCAA could only muster up a payoff of \$22,145,000 (in '86) to last season's 64 participants in the basketball playoffs. With but 34 teams to share the pie, the bowl payoff was much higher per team.

Considering an over-saturated market, a college football playoff could bring in a lesser amount.

"The market place, of which we are very cautious, is overly saturated with pro football, the Super Bowl, pro football playoffs, college basketball... (Networks) are not rushing to judgment (over a playoff)," says ABC executive Donn Bernstein. "We don't have our tongues hanging out. Absolutely not!

"What sounds good on a piece of paper is sometimes no good in reality," Bernstein continued. "There are only so many dollars out there. You've got regular season dollars in a major chunk. You've got 17 bowls involving some 40 million bucks and then there's the proposal for a playoff which would add another phase. Something would have to give."

ABC (which signed contracts with the Citrus, Gator and Sugar Bowls through 1991) and Bernstein would just as soon it not be the bowls.

"We're apprehensive about other concepts. We are not in favor of destruction of the bowl system. Where are the dollars (for a playoff)? Will

Chevrolet, Texaco or Lite beer sponsor a playoff for college football? They're only going to go so far. I don't care what you've got."

Bernstein sports a lukewarm attitude toward a one-game playoff. He believes it, too, has numerous flaws. "There needs to be extreme caution as to how a playoff system is approached. You just can't do a game and anoint that game a championship game because they want to call it that, and be done with it," reasoned Bernstein.

"If Nebraska is playing Penn State in the Orange Bowl and it's a No. 1 versus No. 2 situation, and Nebraska wins it, you'd have a hard time convincing somebody on a computerized poll three weeks later that you're going to play for the national championship.

"Tom Osborne isn't going to buy that. If he's beaten Penn State and he's already 11-0 and because the computer says Penn State's the wrong guy — now he's got to come back and beat Miami."

That does sound like a rather ludicrous scenario. But it could happen, provided the NCAA membership gives thumbs up to a positive recommendation by the sub-committee. However, when listening to those in the know, the feeling arises that a player would have a better chance of walking through a lion's den with pork chops and coming out alive

than there is the possibility of even a one-game playoff being enacted.

Feelings of pessimism toward a playoff are prevalent among even the most ardent playoff backers. "I just don't think playoffs are going to happen," lamented Fiesta Bowl executive Bruce Skinner, one of the movers and shakers behind the Penn State-Miami showdown. "I think there's too much pressure on college athletics as it is, and I just think a playoff will enhance that. It was definitely a lot more pressure on all of us (Fiesta Bowl planners), coaches and players, more so than ever before. So much was on the line."

Skinner says the Fiesta Bowl will not seek to match No. 1 and No. 2 again unless a similar situation occurs that will make the matchup possible.

"Check the pulse beat of society!" exclaimed Bernstein. "We must never forget to check the pulse beat of those interested in college athletics! What's the mood? Look at what the presidents did in legislation! Look at it!

"No more SMUs; no more Georgias; no more Floridas. They don't want this crap (confusion surrounding college athletics)! The mood is very conservative right now! You never want to over-judge that mood! And that mood right now is not thinking playoffs just because Joe Paterno wants it!"

Well, that settles that issue for at least 49 more years. Sorry Norm. ♦

Ask Tom Osborne



with Colorado that they have become so enraged at Nebraska and seem to get so ugly? It seems they have pointed to our game as some major turning point for them. Lanny Stanford, Omaha, Nebraska.

A: "I think they've pretty much made a conscious effort since Coach Bill McCartney arrived to place special emphasis on this game because they don't have any natural rivals to get excited about, and a win over Nebraska in any year will certainly give their program a big boost which was pretty obvious this year.

"They play Colorado State, but I don't think they see that as a really exciting game although they did get beat by them this year. It seems like the media in Colorado was promoting our game for almost a full year.

"For us next year, we'll have plenty on our hands — with Arizona State and UCLA and South Carolina — without having to spend extra time trying to worry about the Colorado game. We just have to live with the fact that for 90 percent of the teams we play, Nebraska is their biggest game of the year."

Q: When a player receives a scholarship, is it automatically good for four-five years, or does the player have to re-earn his scholarship every year? Does he have to play up to a certain level to keep his scholarship? Also, why do so many players seem to disappear from the team rosters? Do they just quit because of a lack of playing time or are they encouraged to leave so someone else can take their place? Also, when a recruit makes a verbal commitment to Nebraska, does that mean that he has been guaranteed a scholarship or can Nebraska change its mind and offer the scholarship to a supposedly better player? Keith Johnson, Chicago, Illinois.

A: "First of all, scholarships are certainly given on a yearly basis with the intention of the school and, we hope, the student-athlete working hard toward a full playing career and graduation. This doesn't mean, though, that it always works out that way. Like you mentioned, many players unfortunately don't finish their careers, although we like to think we do a pretty good job of helping the players make the right decisions so that problems don't come up. Sometimes a player

will have trouble with grades. He may drop out completely, just sit out one year to get his grades up or transfer to a junior college to, again, try to get his grades a little better.

"Of course, some players are unfortunately injured and doctors recommend for health reasons that they do not continue playing football. Every once in a while a player will have personal problems and he may feel that leaving school is the only way to solve it. In cases like that, we try to help any way we can, but if it's a truly personal matter, the player simply has to make the decision that's best for him.

"It's really pretty hard to set any kind of on-the-field standard for young men in their teens and early 20s if they haven't had a fair opportunity to develop. Naturally, we try and recruit the kind of athletes that we expect to perform well in college in the long term.

"On the verbal commitments, yes, if a player visits the University of Nebraska and we offer him a scholarship, we plan on honoring that commitment on signing day and we expect him to do the same."

Q: During your era as a head coach has there been any Nebraska high school player that has gone on to national prominence with the Oklahoma Sooners? And, also, is it true that if Nebraska had beaten Oklahoma, Jimmy Johnson of Miami would have selected the Cornhuskers to play in the Orange Bowl to give you a shot at the national championship instead of playing Penn State in the Fiesta Bowl? Marc Kaplan, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

A: "No one of any significance has left the state to play for Oklahoma. I think many, many years ago there was a lineman who played for Oklahoma, but he didn't excel there and I don't remember his name.

"Concerning the national championship, Miami would have played Nebraska in the Orange Bowl only if Penn State had lost one of its last games. From what I was aware of, if we had beaten Oklahoma and Penn State remained unbeaten, Miami still would have gone to the Fiesta Bowl to play the highest ranked team for the national championship."

If you have questions for Coach Osborne, please address them to Ask Tom Osborne, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501. ♦

Q: I was particularly upset about the loss to Colorado this past year, especially how their fans behaved so rudely. So, it came as a great thrill when I learned that Nebraska received verbal commitments from two Colorado high school players that their coaches wanted badly. What is it



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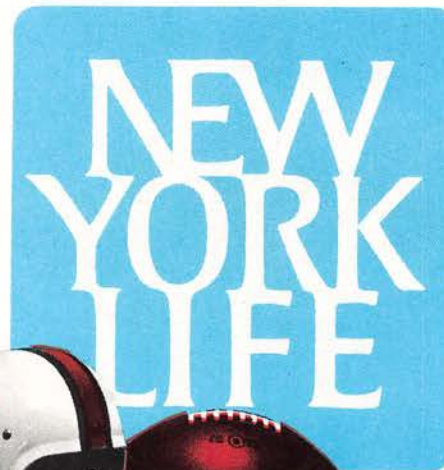
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